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THE NEW REPUBLIC

A Journal of Politics and the Arts

VOLUME 241 WASHINGTON, SEPTEMBER 23, 2010 NUMBER 4,890

Rheevolution

Journalists often annoyingly inflate events in their own backyards, fallaciously treating the local and provincial as mega-trends and national harbingers. Those of us who practice political journalism in Washington, D.C., have been somewhat immune from this tendency. Our city government, with the still-looming figure of a former crackhead mayor and the not-very-distant memory of a federally imposed control board, is way too *sui generis* for that. But for once, Washington has emerged as an urban vanguard—a home to bold and laudable reform. And, rather predictably, it stands poised to revert to form by royally screwing it up.

When Adrian Fenty became mayor in 2007, he made a self-conscious decision to tether his entire political future to the performance of his schools chancellor, Michelle Rhee. He gave her license to make the most painful reforms—closing schools, firing teachers—and never once wavered in his backing, even when her rhetoric may have unnecessarily alienated voters.

When Rhee took over, Washington schools were crying out for reform. By national standards, spending on education was high—and yet that spending had yielded particularly appalling test results. Only 8 percent of eighth graders were at grade level (or above) for math. Rhee hailed from the world of Teach for America, with a strong sense of how a broken system could be remade by demanding accountability. In an exhilarating flurry, she has imposed competence on Washington's shambolic schools—creating new mechanisms for measuring teacher performance, rationalizing the ordering of textbooks, taking care of special-needs students long left dangling on wait-lists. Above all, she negotiated a collective-bargaining agreement that weakened the jobs-for-life protection provided by tenure.

Such reforms take time to yield results. But even in her brief term, there have been plenty of statistics that inspire awe. Over the last three years, the percentage of secondary school students passing competency tests has skyrocketed—by 14 points in reading and 17 points in math. Elementary schools have also made leaps, although they disappointingly slid backwards this past year. What's more, enrollment in the system has stabilized after many years of sustained flight; and graduation rates have increased.

Any revolution will prove deeply unsettling. And Rhee's spurt of reform takes place against a backdrop of demographic transformation. In the local parlance, Washington has gone from Chocolate City to Vanilla Village. According to demographers, African Americans will likely cease to be a majority in the city by the year 2015. There's a strong sense in the black majority that it is "being kicked to the curb," as *Washington Post* columnist Colbert King has put it—a feeling that the culture and well-being of longtime African American residents are being neglected as politicians trip over themselves to build dog parks and bike lanes and ratify gay marriage. Rhee fits this anomic narrative. There's a sense that she has vilified teachers—pillars of the old black bourgeoisie—for the sake of making the schools more hospitable to newly arrived white families.

If the polls are to be believed, the man who will likely topple Adrian Fenty in the September 14 Democratic primary is D.C. City Council Chairman Vincent Gray—a tough critic of Michelle Rhee. Although he won't say that he'll fire her, Gray has attacked the "tenor and pace" of reform and describes Rhee's approach as "100 miles an hour, the children can't wait."

A Fenty defeat, which would really be a Rhee defeat, would deal an especially noxious blow to the national fate of education reform. That's because we've arrived at a curious moment. Thanks to Barack Obama, the Democratic policy establishment and a handful of high-profile politicians have turned against what Steven Brill calls "the base of the base" of the party, the teachers' unions. With the Race to the Top program, Obama has inspired a wave of unprecedented legislation in the states intended to hold teachers accountable for their classroom performance. Unions have understood the new political environment. Since they have assumed the inevitability of reform, they have largely acceded to the change and resigned themselves to merely shaping it at the margins.

If Fenty loses, however, it would send the signal that reform is hardly inevitable. Mayors and governors will be staring at an object lesson of a colleague who staked everything on challenging the teachers' union—and lost. Of course, Fenty has done a ham-fisted job of navigating the city's changing politics. He may even be guilty of arrogance. But that hardly seems justifiable grounds for imperiling education reform, and not just in the District. ◆

Zina Saunders

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Cover illustration by David Cowles

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FOR SUBSCRIPTION INQUIRIES OR PROBLEMS CALL *(800) 827-1289, or visit our website at www.tnr.com/subscriber-services.*

THE NEW REPUBLIC (ISSN 0028-6583), Vol. 241, Number 15, Issue 4,890, September 23, 2010. (Printed in the United States on September 1, 2010.) Published bi-weekly (except for skipped publication dates of January 21, March 4, April 22, August 5, August 26, September 16, October 7, November 25, December 16 & 23, 2010) at 1331 H Street, NW, Suite 700, Washington, D.C. 20005. Telephone (202) 508-4444. Yearly subscriptions, $79.97; foreign, $119.97 (U.S. funds); Canada, $99.97 (U.S. funds). Back issues, $8.00 domestic and $10.00 foreign/Canada (includes postage & handling).

© 2010 by TNR II, LLC.

Periodicals postage paid at Washington, D.C., and additional mailing offices. Rights and permissions: fax (202) 204-4871. Indexed in Readers' Guide, Media Review Digest. For hard copy reprints, call (202) 508-4444. Microform, Canadian Periodical Index, and CD-ROM are available through ProQuest, 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Telephone (800) 521-0600. Postmaster: Send changes of address to The New Republic, P.O. Box 15818, North Hollywood, CA 91615-5818. Member, BPA Worldwide. Send letters and unsolicited manuscripts to letters@tnr.com. Poetry submissions must be e-mailed to poetry@tnr.com.

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Doughfaces

What's Obama's big problem? Liberals.

JONATHAN CHAIT

This is a season of liberal disappointment. Or, rather, *another* season of liberal disappointment. Liberal disappointment follows liberal triumph as night follows day. It is a multitudinous thing, its varieties including, but not limited to, despair, recrimination, impotent rage, potent rage, and existential angst.

The genus currently in full bloom is *precrimination*, a subspecies of recrimination that occurs before the fact. In this case, the liberal argument is that President Obama has blown the 2010 elections by moving too far to the center. My colleague John B. Judis made this case in last issue's cover story ("The Unnecessary Fall," September 2), and a similar argument is being advanced by *Newsweek*'s Michael Hirsh, as well as in other quarters.

Generally, these precriminations place too much emphasis on political tactics and too little on the basic reality that midterm elections, huge congressional majorities stretched deep into hostile territory, and a presidency that began at the outset of a financial crisis is a recipe for a wipeout.

Now, structural factors don't explain *all* of the Democrats' woes. If the party loses, say, 80 seats, it's fair to say the result was worse than it had to be. The question is what extra factor made it worse. Most liberals say it's the administration's insufficient boldness or populism. I say the problem is liberals.

Let's first review the indictments. The most common flaw of the various expressions of liberal disappointment is a tendency to attribute to Obama power over forces beyond his control. Liberals bemoaning the failure of cap-and-trade or the public option regularly descend into magical thinking when it comes time to explain where Obama could have conjured nonexistent votes in the Senate.

The most persuasive critiques of Obama center on presidential appointments, which do lie within his command. As The New Republic's Bradford Plumer has documented, Obama neglected to undertake deep reforms of the Minerals Management Service that might have prevented the Gulf oil disaster. He has also left vacant crucial judicial seats and Federal Reserve Board positions. But those failures have had little political impact.

If the Democrats' dire outlook owes itself primarily to the economy, then shouldn't they have passed a larger stimulus? Alas, the assumption that Obama could have gotten more money out of the Senate is questionable. GOP moderates, who held the bill's fate in their hands, whittled down even the $800 billion version. Perhaps, if Obama had proposed something larger, the moderates—who tend to position themselves in the middle of any debate—would have simply started the bidding from a higher point.

On the other hand, it's worth noting that, at the time, even $800 billion was considered "enormous," one of the adjectives constantly bandied about in press reports, along with "giant" and "massive." Reporters focused obsessively on the stimulus's impact on the deficit and ignored objections from the left, even though mainstream economists shared them. Of 59 network-news segments covering the stimulus debate in the three weeks before its passage, only three even mentioned the critique that the stimulus was too small. In the context of that debate, Obama may well have risked total abandonment by GOP moderates, the failure of any stimulus, and the neutering of his presidency. Perhaps he should have run the risk, but the case is hardly open and shut—especially given the record of achievement that followed.

But one of the Democrats' election-year problems is certainly avoidable: The party's base is morbidly depressed, despite having a president with the most effective progressive record in more than four decades. Indeed, at some point you have to wonder if it is possible to satisfy liberals at all. Let's tally up the postwar record. Obama—liberal disappointment. Bill Clinton? Even worse. (Disillusionment with the Clinton years sparked Ralph Nader's decisive third-party challenge in 2000.) Jimmy Carter? Also a liberal disappointment, inspiring both a liberal primary challenge from Ted Kennedy and a general-election challenge by liberal John Anderson, whom TNR endorsed.

Remember LBJ? Liberals would rather not. They ran multiple candidates against him in 1968 and drove him from the race in defeat. John F. Kennedy was assassinated before liberal disappointment could fully blossom. Liberals hated Harry Truman, too. This magazine called on him to resign—"Franklin Roosevelt kept our interests in proper relation to our values," bemoaned an editorial. "In President Truman there is no single concept and no superior will"—and Henry Wallace, a former TNR editor, waged a third-party protest candidacy in 1948. (Place your Franklin Foer '12 Intrade bets today.)

The cycle of disappointment suggests that perhaps the problem here is not the Democratic presidents, flawed though they may be, but their delicate supporters. Liberals tend to imagine progress occurring in a blaze of populist glory, but almost inevitably it requires grubby compromises with powerful and unseemly interests. Medicare, Social Security—they were all half-measures that involved a devil's bargain. In 1949, Arthur Schlesinger identified the "doughface" progressive tendency as a discomfort with the realities and compromises of governing. "Politics becomes, not a means of getting things done," he wrote, "but an outlet for private grievances and frustrations."

I don't think this trait describes all of Obama's (or Clinton's) liberal critics, and certainly not Judis. But it does reflect a persistent liberal uneasiness with power. The liberal psyche may tend toward opposition—an individualistic style that makes the maintenance of governing coalitions impossible. Conservatives are hardly loath to decry betrayals, real or imagined, by Republican presidents. Yet they generally have the sense to wait until an opportune moment. While right-wingers now disdain George W. Bush as a big-government sellout, they remained in cult-of-personality mode all the way through Bush's reelection, tossing him overboard only after he had outlived his usefulness to the movement.

The surprising thing may not be that liberals soured on Obama, but that they soured on him during what's certain to be the most liberal period of his presidency. I can't even imagine how they'll react when his governing majorities disappear, and he's ground down in trench warfare. But I do have a good intuition whom they'll blame for it. ◆

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- Iris Cross, BP Community Outreach

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Claims
Cleanup
Economic Investment
Environmental Restoration
Health and Safety
Wildlife

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The Mall

If You Build It . . .

My friend, Imam Rauf.

Dear Imam Feisal,

Ramadan Kareem. I pray that you are bearing up under the strain of recent months. I write as a well-wisher and friend. Though we met only briefly, our encounter turned out to be at a fateful moment, and, for me at least, was of lasting significance. We met, you will recall, on September 5, 2001, at a symposium on a book I was about to publish recounting my journey into Islam and Christianity in the Holy Land. (The book was actually released six days later, on September 11.) You appeared on the panel offering a Muslim response to my journey. I was deeply moved by your presence—it wasn't easy finding a Muslim cleric willing to appear publicly with an Israeli—and by the warm words you had for the book itself, which was written from a position of deep Jewish attachment to the land of Israel. I felt grateful for the courage you showed then, supporting my call for the Muslim world to come to terms with the Jewish return home. And I recall you beaming with gratitude when I spoke of my experience in joining the Muslim prayer line and the reverence—the love—I felt for its choreography of surrender to God.

In recent weeks, in discussions with friends in the American Jewish community about your initiative to build a mosque and Muslim community center near Ground Zero, I've found myself repeatedly defending your integrity as an interfaith partner. If you are not a worthy dialogue partner for the Jewish community, then there is almost no one in Islam with whom we can speak.

When our mutual friend and veteran of Muslim-Jewish dialogue, Yehezkel Landau, spoke on your behalf at the Community Board public hearing recently held over your proposed project, I felt it was a gesture of what Jews call *kiddush Hashem*, sanctifying God's name. Yehezkel told the hostile audience that, as a former Israeli soldier whose son is now serving in the Israeli army, he affirms that you are "a spiritual ally, not an enemy." Though other speakers on your behalf were heckled, Yehezkel was greeted with respectful silence.

That small moment of grace revealed how Muslims and Jews can help each other. As Judea Pearl—father of Daniel Pearl, *The Wall Street Journal* reporter beheaded by jihadists—has put it, Muslims can provide legitimacy for the Jewish people in the East and Jews can provide legitimacy for Islam in the West. I know that same sentiment inspires your longtime outreach to the American Jewish community. You told me that the model for Islamic modernization you sought was exemplified by modern Orthodox Judaism. That you would find inspiration in one aspect of the Jewish response to modernity says much about your openness toward Judaism and friendship toward the Jewish people.

I don't deny being troubled by some of your statements on the Middle East. You have publicly called yourself a supporter of Israel—and how many Muslim clerics have dared speak those words?—yet you've also endorsed a "one-state solution," code for the destruction of the Jewish state. You have rejected the subterfuge of some Muslim clerics who condemn terror against "innocent civilians" but exclude Israelis, yet you've refused to condemn Hamas.

Sometimes it seems that you want to be all things to all people—a liberal to non-Muslim Americans, upholder of Muslim grievances to traditionalists—and that you simply deny the resulting dissonance, as if every contradiction can be healed by your goodwill. Some of your statements about America and the Muslim world—partly blaming U.S. foreign policy for September 11, or saying that America has killed more Muslims than Al Qaeda has killed innocent non-Muslims, as if the terrorists and their targets were morally equivalent—pander to the most simplistic sentiments within your community. But where some see hypocrisy, or even a hidden agenda, I prefer to see the struggles of a good man who wants to help his community enter the American mainstream, while reassuring the faithful of his loyalty.

I believe that you intend to create a center of Islamic moderation near Ground Zero. And it is precisely for that reason that I am turning to you with a plea to reconsider your plans to build the center in its current form. Instead, I urge you to consider turning the site into a center for interfaith encounter. Build the mosque—but do so together with a church and a synagogue and a center for common reflection for all three faiths and for those with no faith. Do this, Imam Feisal, not to surrender to your critics but to honor their pain, and, in the process, to honor Islam.

My own point of reference in this controversy is the Auschwitz convent. You will recall that, in the mid-1980s, a group of Carmelite nuns established a convent on the grounds of Auschwitz. For Jews around the world, the convent was perceived as an attempt to "Christianize" the Holocaust, to deny the Jewishness of the overwhelming majority of the victims of Auschwitz.

In 1989, I went to Poland and discovered to my shock that the Jewish critics were wrong. The convent was founded in Auschwitz I, a slave-labor camp and administrative center for Auschwitz II, or Birkenau, the death camp whose purpose was the destruction of the Jewish people. The distinction was crucial for Poles: Thousands of Polish Catholics died in Auschwitz I, and the nuns were there to pray for their souls and counter the evil that had been done on Polish soil. There was, in other words, no intention

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to Christianize the Holocaust. Yet Pope John Paul II seemed to realize that, even if Jews had misunderstood the nuns' intentions, their sensitivities toward that ground deserved respect. And so the Polish pope ordered a convent of Polish nuns out of Auschwitz—in the process sending an extraordinary message of spiritual generosity.

I am urging you to rise to your moment of spiritual greatness. You have dedicated your life to helping Islam enter the American mainstream. In its current form, though, your project will have the opposite effect. The way to ease Islam into the American mainstream is in the company of its fellow Abrahamic faiths. The great obstacle to Islam's reconciliation with the West is the adherence of even mainstream Muslims to a kind of medieval notion of interfaith relations. Muslim spokesmen often note how, during the Middle Ages, Islam provided protection for Christianity and Judaism. But that model—tolerance under Islamic rule—is inadequate for our time. The new interfaith theology affirms the spiritual legitimacy of all three Abrahamic faiths. Whether or not we accept one another's faiths as theologically true, we can affirm them as *devotionally* true, that is, as worthy vessels for a God-centered life.

What will define a genuinely American Islam will be its ability to embrace this modern notion of interfaith relations. A 15-story Islamic center near Ground Zero will undermine that process. In the Muslim world, as you well know, architecture often buttresses triumphalist theology. Throughout the Holy Land, minarets deliberately tower over churches. However inadvertently, your current plan would be understood by large parts of the Muslim world as a victory over the West. Merely adding an interfaith component to the proposed Islamic center would not counter that distorted impression. Instead, it would likely reinforce the medieval theology of extending "protection" to Christianity and Judaism under the auspices of Islam. But an interfaith center in which the three Abrahamic faiths are given equal status would send the message that I believe you intend to convey.

There is no more appropriate place to assert the emergence of an American Islam than Ground Zero. And no American Muslim leader is better positioned to birth that process, dear Imam Feisal, than you.

With respect and blessings,

Yossi Klein Halevi

Overstated

Why Palestine won't remake the Middle East.

The most durable myth in the Middle East is: "It's Palestine, stupid." It lies at the heart of Barack Obama's Middle East diplomacy, which is why the president has been pummeling the Israelis and pushing the Palestinians to resume talks. According to this myth, the most urgent problem is not the Iranian bomb or Syrian ambitions. It is not Egypt, once an anchor of stability and now slipping into precarious irrelevance. It is not Iraq, which is tottering between occupation and anarchy. It is not Al Qaeda in Yemen, the return of the Taliban, or the ticking time bomb that is Pakistan. Nor is it despotism, illiteracy, and misery, or the oppression of women, sects, and creeds.

No, the problem is three slivers of land known as Israel, Gaza, and the West Bank, and this on a geostrategic stage that extends from Ankara to Afghanistan. Defuse *that* issue, and everything will fall into place. A paradigmatic example of this thinking came in a CNN interview with Jordan's King Abdullah earlier this year. For him, "all the conflicts lead to Jerusalem." Iran's bomb project? Never mind, for "if we solve the Israeli-Palestinian problem, why would Iranians want to spend so much money on a military program? It makes no sense."

Solve the Palestinian problem, the king opined, and then we can "start to unwind all the other pressure points inside of the Middle East." So let's start with Iran. The nuclear program goes back to the Shah. Iran was then Israel's closest ally in the Middle East, and the last item on Reza Pahlavi's far-flung agenda, if it was there at all, must have been Palestine. Today, Tehran is reaching for the bomb for the usual reasons: as deterrent, as badge of great-power status, as keystone of regional supremacy. Will the Khomeinists really ditch their nuclear venture once the Israeli oppressors have been driven from the Temple Mount, with its Al Aqsa Mosque? Of course not.

As for the region's other conflicts: If Palestinians had a state, would Hamas and Fatah stop killing each other? They kill for power, not for Palestine. And if they have Hebron, what about Haifa? The Palestinians do deserve their own state, but it would be a revisionist one from the get-go, not a pillar of stability.

How about Syria? Once the Palestinian flag flies over Jerusalem, would Assad Junior call for free elections at home and take his heavy hand off Lebanon? Think again. Assad rules as head of the tiny Alawite minority; free elections would be his end. Also, Damascus has been claiming Lebanon as part of "Greater Syria" ever since France and Britain drew the borders after World War I—long before Israel was founded in 1948.

What about Egypt? Anwar Sadat made peace with Israel at Camp David not to liberate Palestine, but to regain the Sinai. Interestingly, that peace has held, cold as it is, for 30 years—never mind the occupation or Israel's bloody foray into Gaza at the end of 2008. Again, let's go back in history. Egypt's dictator Nasser spent the '50s and '60s reaching for hegemony over the region—for the benefit of Egypt, not of Palestine.

Saddam Hussein fought the longest and bloodiest war in recent Middle Eastern history against Iran in order to diminish Iraq's ancient rival and seize the oil fields of Khuzestan. Once in possession of the oil, Saddam did not intend to turn around and liberate Palestine. Nor did he grab Kuwait in 1990 as a way station on the road to Jerusalem. The game was regional supremacy.

And what about the Hashemites? In 1970, during "Black September," Abdullah's father, Hussein, killed more Palestinians—up to 25,000, they claimed—than Israel did in two intifadas (1987–1993, 2000–2005). If Palestine ever comes into being, Jordan will be the first to establish military oversight of the young state, which is not a pleasant prospect for amicability.

This does not end the tally of conflicts that have nothing to do with Palestine. Farther afield, think about civil war in Algeria, which claimed about 150,000 lives. Think about ethnic cleansing in Sudan; Libya's belligerence and its nuclear program until 2003; Egypt's war

Department of Corrections

"The Unnecessary Fall of Barack Obama" (September 2) stated that AIG had paid out $165 billion in bonuses from the $170 billion it received from the government. AIG in fact paid $165 million. We regret the error.

ANTHONY RUSSO

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in Yemen in the '60s, followed by civil war there in the '90s. Even the most florid imagination fails to relate all this mayhem to Palestine.

Now shift to the domestic pathologies of the region. An independent Palestine will heal none of them. It will not end illiteracy, the second-class status of women, the mass unemployment of the young, the "state socialism" that asphyxiates economies. Nor will it end the rule of the few, be they king or colonel. It will not spawn research universities, independent media, or free institutions in general. Arab authoritarianism, not the situation of Palestine, is what stifles development and growth, while enshrining isolation from the rest of the world.

Despotism, of course, needs the enemy at the gate to distract peoples from their own lack of freedom. This, in the end, is where Palestine does play a role—but not in the sense that King Abdullah and others believe. It is a most convenient diversion that allows regimes to mobilize hatred against the Other that is Israel. Let the people imbibe this heady brew, and they will forget what really ails them—from poverty to repression. "Busy giddy minds with foreign quarrels," Shakespeare's Henry IV advises his son and successor. The point here is that the real sources of conflict lie at home.

Some argue that the resolution of the Palestine issue will soothe the souls of the masses and so at last allow the regimes to cast their lot with the United States. This assumes that despots are captives of their peoples; it is the other way around. It also assumes that Palestine overwhelms all other interests in the Arab calculus—that Arab leaders truly cherish America, but dare not commit as long as Washington keeps Israel on a long leash. Yet it is impossible to envision peace in Palestine turning Damascus or Tehran into U.S. allies, or causing Saudi Arabia to leap off the fence and join an American-led alliance against Iran. Nor will it stop Al Qaeda, which launched its crusade not for the sake of Palestine, but against the despoiler of sacred Islamic soil that is the United States.

By all means, let's have a Palestinian state. But let's also dispatch the myth that such a state will "start to unwind all the other pressure points." Shoddy myths make for faulty policy.

JOSEF JOFFE

Josef Joffe is editor of DIE ZEIT, a senior fellow at the Institute for International Studies, and Abramowitz Fellow at Stanford's Hoover Institution.

Waterworld

The coming seawall craze.

THIS FALL, construction is set to begin on a $4 million pop-up floodwall near the National Mall in Washington, D.C. It's designed to be assembled quickly in the event that torrential rains cause the nearby Potomac River to spill into the city. (Four years ago, heavy storms led to the flooding of buildings like the National Archives and the offices of the IRS.) The ten-foot wall is high enough that it should be able to stop even monster floods like the one in 1942 that caused millions of dollars in damage.

But the new barrier will have one glaring flaw. According to the Army Corps of Engineers, the wall's design doesn't take into account future sea-level rise caused by climate change. As the planet warms and the ice caps melt, the seas will begin advancing. In a tidal river like the Potomac, whose height rises and falls with the oceans, that can make a big difference when major storms hit. Every foot of sea-level rise will reduce the floodwall's effectiveness, making the capital more vulnerable to storm surges.

What makes D.C.'s obliviousness to sea-level rise so striking is that the warnings are perfectly clear. Greenhouse-gas emissions are rising at an alarming rate. Each year brings new studies finding that the polar ice sheets are disintegrating faster than worst-case projections. A slew of estimates now peg the likely resulting sea-level rise at three to four feet by the end of the century. And even that may be a lowball figure: A new book by geoscientists Orrin Pilkey and Rob Young, *The Rising Sea*, warns that we should plan for at least seven feet. After all, Atlantic hurricanes can already produce storm surges of 16 feet or more at landfall.

Sea-level rise won't just hit all at once at the end of the century—it's incremental. By 2050, the oceans could well have risen one and a half feet. In Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina, that would mean the periodic swamping of more than 400 miles of major roads and highways, 150 miles of railroad, and one-third of the land base of the region's major ports. A 2009 federal infrastructure report compares the potential impacts of these floods to the nationwide air-traffic jams that follow a storm closing down a major airport. The difference is that flood damage would last far longer.

And yet, despite a series of detailed studies on the issue, federal and local governments are doing very little to prepare for sea-level rise. In many places, they're actually making things worse.

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THE NEW REPUBLIC (ISSN 0028-6583), Vol. 241, Number 15, Issue 4,890, September 23, 2010. (Printed in the United States on September 1, 2010.) Published biweekly (except for skipped publication dates of March 4, April 22, August 5, August 26, September 16, October 7, November 25, and December 16 & 23, 2010) at 1331 H Street, NW, Suite 700, Washington, D.C. 20005. Telephone (202) 508-4444. Yearly subscriptions, $79.97; foreign, $119.97 (U.S. funds); Canada, $99.97 (U.S. funds). Back issues, $8.00 domestic and $10.00 foreign/Canada (includes postage & handling). © 2010 by TNR II, LLC. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, D.C., and additional mailing offices. Rights and permissions: fax (202) 204-4871. Indexed in Readers' Guide, Media Review Digest. For hard copy reprints, call (202) 508-4444. Microform, Canadian Periodical Index, and CD-ROM are available through ProQuest, 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Telephone (800) 521-0600. Postmaster: Send changes of address to The New Republic, P.O. Box 15818, North Hollywood, CA 91615-5818. Member, BPA Worldwide. Send letters and unsolicited manuscripts to letters@tnr.com. Poetry submissions must be e-mailed to poetry@tnr.com. **For subscription inquiries or problems call (800) 827-1289 or visit our website at *www.tnr.com/subscriber-services*.**

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There are three broad options for dealing with sea-level rise. We can build walls to ward off the sea. We can put our coastal buildings and infrastructure up on stilts. Or we can plan a slow retreat and move our built environment farther inland. All of these options would take a long time to implement, and many of them would be absurdly expensive. Jim Titus, chief sea-level-rise expert at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), estimates that shore protection for the lower 48 states could cost around $1 trillion.

And seawalls—a necessity to protect places like Manhattan—could create as many problems as they solve. Dikes, levees, and bulkheads will destroy many coastal wetlands by preventing them from migrating inland as the seas advance. Most of the coastal wetlands in the mid-Atlantic could disappear by the end of the century if they have no place to go and the seas rise three feet or more. These wetlands are highly valuable, reducing the impact of floods, protecting against storms, and shielding freshwater supplies from the ocean. They're also key nurseries for fish: About two-thirds of the commercial fisheries off the Atlantic depend on wetlands, where invertebrates and small fish that feed on decomposing matter support rockfish, menhaden, blue crab, and other large species.

There's another problem with seawalls: In some areas, as they are built higher to hold back the rising waters, more and more people on the dry side will end up living well below sea level. Titus points out that this would leave us with "more than a hundred cities and towns that look like New Orleans"—giant bathtubs that can fill up from one well-placed hurricane.

That leaves strategic retreat—moving farther away from the water—as the ideal option. Yet, in the United States, we're moving in the opposite direction. As a 2009 study in *Environmental Research Letters* (*ERL*) points out, government policies are encouraging development in the areas most vulnerable to sea-level rise. Along the Atlantic, 60 percent of the coastline that sits less than three feet above sea level has been opened for new houses, hotels, businesses, and roads. (By contrast, only 10 percent has been set aside for conservation.)

Inevitably, when the seas rise to threaten new houses and strip malls, so will calls for costly protection. "At every step along the way, development seems like a good idea to the person who owns the land," says Titus. "And then, to the person who buys that house, shore protection seems like a good idea. But where that all carries us is toward a coast that is almost entirely developed and with some kind of shore protection. . . . Then, we end up losing our wetlands in most areas."

It doesn't help that the federal government is offering incentives for such shortsighted development. The *ERL* study notes that the Army Corps of Engineers abets this frenzied construction by routinely approving shoreline-hardening projects with little scrutiny. Dave Olson, a Corps spokesman, says that the agency's hands are tied: By law, it has to approve protection for any new development that state and local authorities allow—and, besides, sea-level rise projections are too uncertain to base decisions on. But critics say the agency is an obstacle to saner planning. "Get the Corps off the shore," Pilkey and Young argue in *The Rising Sea*. "It has too long a history of checkered competence, high-cost construction, and inefficiency due in significant part to its close dependence on Congress for pork barrel funding."

A preview of D.C.'s warmer, wetter future.

Then there's the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Fema, says Skip Stiles of Wetlands Watch, encourages high-risk coastal development by subsidizing flood insurance for property owners. "Fema's sending the wrong market signals," Stiles says. He argues that the insurance program should be overhauled so that no local projects get fema aid unless they have detailed plans for sea-level rise. Likewise, local building codes should take the prospect of rising oceans into account.

So why hasn't any of this happened yet? For one thing, the politics of sea-level rise are still hazy—no one seems to agree on whether it's a local, state, or federal responsibility. And Congress is not doing much to resolve these issues. The climate bill that passed the House last year merely calls for more research, even though more blue-ribbon panels seem superfluous at this point. "Do you need cost-benefit analysis to know that you're going to protect Manhattan?" asks Titus. "That you're not going to allow the Jefferson Memorial to go underwater? That Miami is going to continue to exist?" Those aren't trick questions. But, for now, they're going unanswered. *Steve Nash*

Steve Nash is the author of Millipedes and Moon Tigers: Science and Policy in an Age of Extinction and Blue Ridge 2020. He teaches environmental studies and journalism at the University of Richmond.

The Great Basin

Inside the mind of Sharron Angle.

In her campaign to displace Harry Reid from the U.S. Senate, Nevada Republican Sharron Angle has hit a few snags. Among the lessons learned: When holding a press conference, take at least one question. When discussing how to deal with electoral defeat, avoid suggesting "Second Amendment remedies." When you've once complained that black football jerseys are satanic, prepare to have someone reveal it. And, when discussing pregnancy brought on by rape, eschew the phrase "lemon situation into lemonade."

In early August, I visited Las Vegas to see Angle address a monthly lunch of the Republican Men's Club, held at a restaurant on the Bali Hai golf course just south of the Strip. As I walked in, an elderly veteran passed me a slip of paper that read, "opi ma ka ui." This turned out to be an acronym for, "obama prays in mosques advocating killing all us infidels."

When Angle stood up, she was almost dwarfed by the podium. "I need your help to take back Nevada's U.S. Senate seat from let's-make-a-deal, tax-and-spend Harry Reid," she said. "We know what's at stake here and in our state and we're ready for it. We know—that—it's one of those, um, situations that Dick Morris spoke about. I was pleased to have Dick Morris sign the flyleaf of a book for my husband and it said in that flyleaf, 'Dear Sharron and Ted, the fate of the nation rides on you.'"

This seemed to lose the audience for a moment. "Dick Morris was mistaken," Angle continued. "The fate of the nation rides on us—on all of us here in Nevada,

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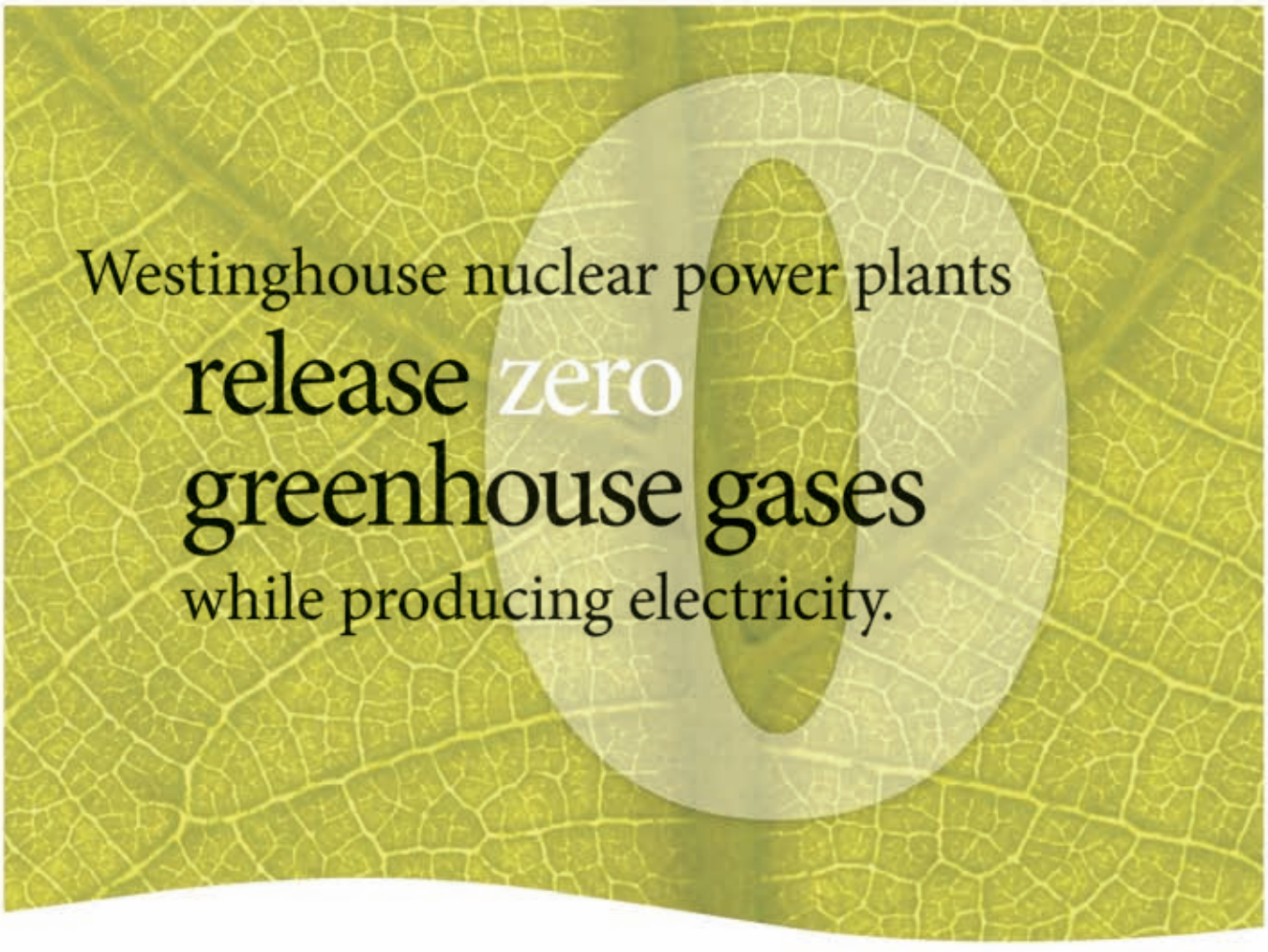

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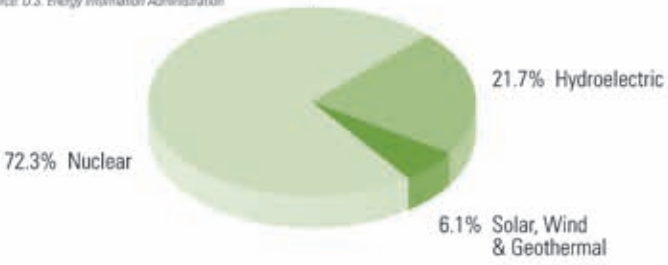

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and we know what he means. We've watched over the last eighteen months as our economy has [pause] truly been waterboarded. We here in Nevada probably feel that torture more than anywhere else because of the, uh, economy that we live under that relies on discretionary spending of other states, and then the president, Obama, comes to our state and says if you're coming to Las Vegas you're coming on a junket, and Harry Reid agrees with him."

This had gotten weird quite fast—not least because instead of quoting, say, George Washington, Angle had chosen to cite the less universally respected Dick Morris. At one point, she went hoarse and paused to take a sip of water. "Sorry about that," she said. "I've been running from the press so much!" The audience cheered. "I've been doing so many interviews," Angle added hastily. "One day I did fifteen interviews, and it does kind of get your vocal cords because you don't use—well, I won't go into that—but you use more of your head than your diaphragm. Anyway, um, I was speaking about paying back our one point one trillion dollars on the deficit."

Sharron Angle

Since winning the Republican primary in June, Angle's campaign has pretty much shut her off from the mainstream press, perhaps for understandable reasons. The strategy seems to be to remind Nevadans of how much they hate Harry Reid and hope they forget that the alternative is Sharron Angle. It's not the worst approach. Nevadans may well decide that we live in strange times, so we may as well have strange senators. But, at some point, even the Reid-haters may find themselves thinking hard about how much they really want what's behind door number two. And, they might reasonably ask, what *is* behind it, anyway?

Angle has spent 56 of her 61 years in Nevada, which has a distinctly Western conservative tradition born of discontent with federal interference in use of the land. In the 1990s, the Angles were living in Tonopah, a scruffy settlement of fewer than 3,500 people, surrounded by miles of sagebrush and empty desert. At the time, Nevada was experiencing a resurgence of the Sagebrush Rebellion, a movement of ranchers and miners aggravated by environmental regulations. A local county commissioner named Dick Carver was engaging in acts of civil disobedience, such as taking a bulldozer to a road that had been closed by the federal government.

Carver was a hero in Tonopah, but he had an arch-enemy—a Bureau of Land Management supervisor in charge of preventing overgrazing. That was Ted Angle—husband of Sharron. Ted, who subscribed to the creationist belief that man should not destroy God's work, became known in Tonopah as a "critter lover" and an "agent for the Sierra Club," according to one report. In 1995, the Angles left town for Reno, partly because pressure on the family had become overwhelming. "I couldn't believe it when she said she was running against the government," one Nye County rancher said. "They *were* the government."

While living in Tonopah, Angle had served on the local school board and joined the far-right Independent American Party of Nevada, which stands for the right of states to enact conservative policies, such as outlawing abortion. "The monopolistic political parties have decreed God irrelevant and out of fashion in our schools and in our laws," declares a 1994 party newsletter. "Taxes, homosexuality, and the worship of government are brazenly promoted."

By the late '90s, Angle was mulling higher office. She consulted her pastor at the Sonrise Church in Reno, which the Angles attended until a couple of years ago. One recent Sunday, I went to a service and introduced myself to Pastor John Reed. "Oh, cool! I know Sharron real well," he said. "I strongly encouraged her, and I believed God's call was on her," he told me afterward. "There's a scripture, too, that I'm going to show you that I showed her and quoted to her." He read from the Book of Esther, in which Esther, a Jew and a Persian queen, risks her life to persuade her husband to prevent a massacre of her fellow Jews. The passage had suggested to Reed that, during troubled times, special leaders were called to save their people—leaders like Sharron Angle. (Reed said he was even more convinced of the nation's need for Angle following Barack Obama's election: "From his book that he put out, he said, if push comes to shove—and I can't remember how he says it—but if there's a problem between Islam and America, or Christianity and Islam, I'm going to take the side of Islam.")

Angle became a Republican and won a seat in the state assembly, serving from 1999 through 2005. She kept a wary distance from her fellow legislators—even in the lunchroom, where lawmakers traditionally lay aside partisanship. "We always found her a little bit creepy," says Sheila Leslie, a Democrat whose term started in the same year. Angle became famous for her numerous lone "no" votes among the 42 assembly members, causing bills that passed "41-to-Angle."

When Angle pushed for legislation, the measures often involved a greater degree of government meddling than one might expect. She advocated for a smoking ban in gaming areas of grocery stores and a bill to fund the teaching of phonics in public schools (a pet cause of conservative activist Phyllis Schlafly). She pressed for a measure that would have provided Nevada women with shower hangers explaining how to do breast self-examinations, which died because Angle insisted the instructions refer to a discredited link between abortion and breast cancer.

Sometimes her crusades were more idiosyncratic. One year, said Leslie, Angle pressured her to investigate claims of a repeatedly debunked link between vaccinations and autism. (Leslie, who chaired the health committee, declined to hold a hearing.) Another time, Angle became intrigued by reports of a groundbreaking approach to drug treatment being employed in a Mexican prison, involving "sauna based detoxification." This regimen turned out to be based on the teachings of L. Ron Hubbard, and although Angle, by all accounts, knew nothing about the Scientology link, she suffered serious political embarrassment.

Still, Angle's constituents liked her and felt she listened to them. And she attracted powerful allies. For several years, Angle headed an effort to enact a cap on property taxes. When she ran for a congressional seat in 2006, the Club for Growth helped her to raise hundreds of thousands of out-of-state dollars for her unsuccessful primary campaign.

Angle likes to portray her race against Reid as a contest of big money versus grassroots. But her success in the Nevada primary was thanks largely to the Tea Party Express, the fundraising arm of a political action committee formed by veteran GOP operatives in Sacramento. (The group has been slow to adopt fiscal austerity in-house: The PAC's recent FEC filings list a $1,597.29 dinner for six at Chops Steakhouse.) The Tea Party Express poured over $500,000 in pro-Angle advertising into the primary, causing her to surge from 5 percent in the polls in April to victory in June.

Since winning the primary, Angle has often been described, along with the Kentucky Republican Rand Paul, as a "Tea

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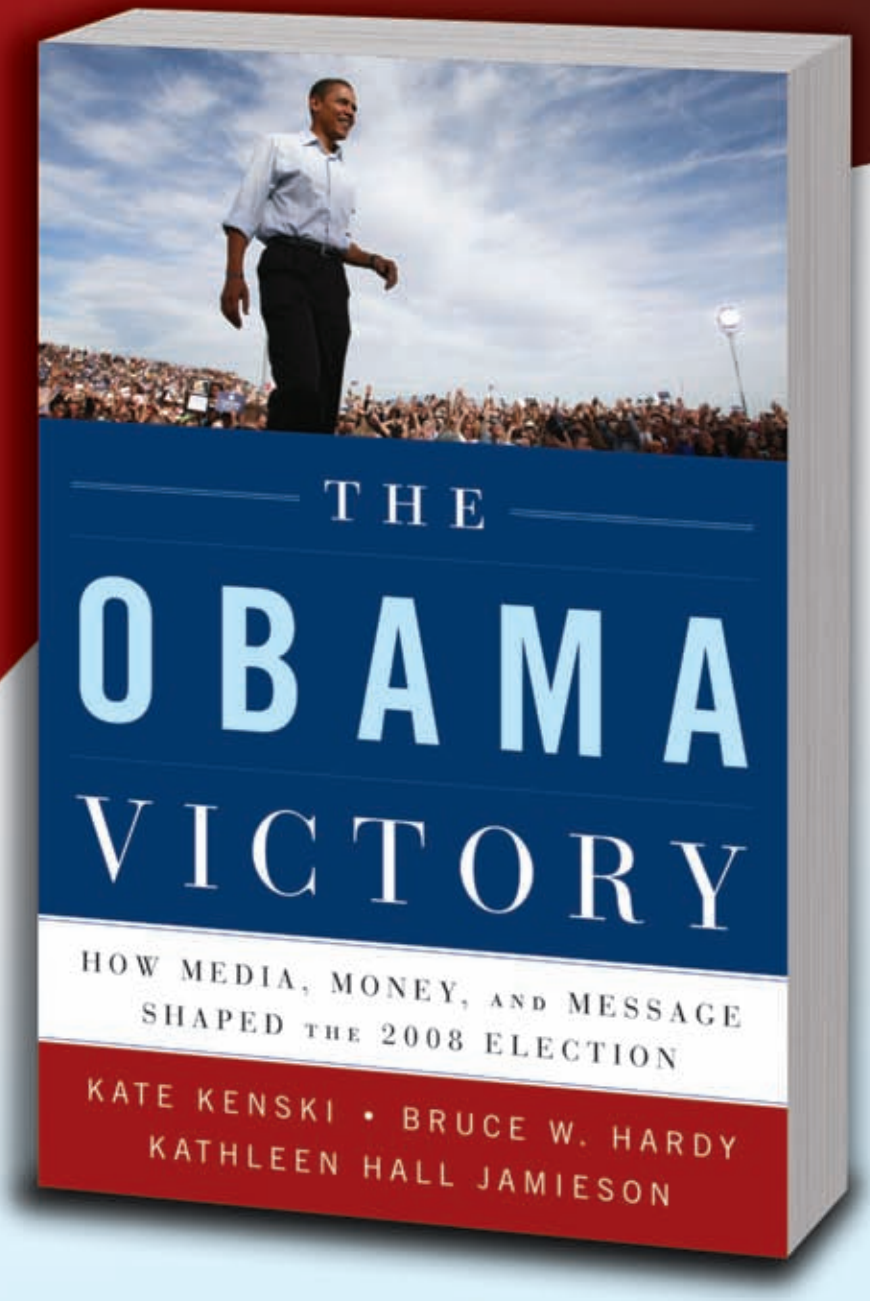

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Party favorite." But Paul, in keeping with the Tea Party image of rebellion, is often willing to buck his fellow Republicans on matters such as federal drug policy, agricultural subsidies, and the Patriot Act. By contrast, I searched in vain to find Angle disagreeing with any key elements of the GOP agenda. For all of her quirks, Angle's politics seem closer to the familiar George W. Bush coalition of the rich, the religious, and the warlike than to the Rand Paul coalition of the parsimonious and libertarian.

On my way out of Reno, I drove by Angle's house, a modest one-story structure on a quiet street in the western end of town. The Angles weren't home, but getting into a pickup truck outside was Sharron's daughter, Joye, visiting from Fallon, about 70 miles away. She asked, with disarming modesty, for a "fair representation" of her mother. I also spoke with a number of Angle's friends, who described her as kind, unassuming, and idealistic, just an ordinary wife and mother who has followed her ideals. They think that Reid, who has a nearly four-to-one cash advantage, is out to destroy their friend by painting her as a nut.

Of course Reid is out to destroy Angle by painting her as a nut. His approval ratings are hovering around 40 percent, and Nevada has been blanketed with signs reading, "Will Rogers never met Harry Reid"—a reference to the Rogers line that he'd never met a man he didn't like. Reid's only hope for reelection is to convince enough angry Nevadans to utilize a ballot option unique to their state and vote for "None of the Above" instead of for Sharron Angle.

So far, his approach has been working. Angle's onetime eleven-point lead has evaporated, and the two candidates are essentially tied. But to credit Reid for this is to do an injustice to Angle, who has done most of the heavy lifting in reviving Reid's fortunes. The latest flare-up has been the resurfacing of a 2009 radio interview in which the host suggests to Angle that some U.S. senators are "domestic enemies," and Angle responds, "Yes, I think you're right." When asked about it recently, Angle dodged the question. Does she really believe in such enemies? Or does she wish to avoid repudiating her earlier statements? Or is she simply confused? One never knows with Angle, but it's all the more reason to "question with boldness," as Thomas Jefferson, or maybe Dick Morris, once said. *T.A. Frank*

T.A. Frank is a writer in Los Angeles and an editor at the Washington Monthly.

Year of the Nutjob

Meet this election's most, well, interesting candidates.

James Downie and Alexander C. Hart

How does the class of 2010 stack up against its lunatic predecessor, of 1994? There are the well-known data points—Rand Paul's alleged kidnapping of a college classmate; Sharron Angle's assertion that there are "domestic enemies" in Congress—that suggest we've reached a new zenith of crazy, making Newt Gingrich's bunch look like sensible establishmentarians by comparison. But Paul and Angle only begin to capture the strangeness of candidates out there who may soon be occupying your Capitol and governor's mansion. Herewith, a guide to the truly special specimens.

David Cowles

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Tenther Madness: *Tom Emmer, gubernatorial candidate, Minnesota*

For most Tea Partiers, reining in the federal government is an article of faith. But state Representative Tom Emmer has taken the trouble to figure out the logistics. Emmer is a "Tenther"—that is, he believes the Tenth Amendment (which reserves powers not granted to Uncle Sam for the states) should be used to nullify numerous Democratic laws. He's also proposed some roadblocks of his own—like a state constitutional amendment that would prohibit any federal law from being enforced in Minnesota unless it's ratified by supermajorities of the state legislature. So wary is Emmer of excessive government intervention that he's come out for laxer drunk-driving laws, although it's conceivable this position was partly inspired by his two previous arrests for DWI.

The Schwinn Conspiracy: *Dan Maes, gubernatorial candidate, Colorado*

Dan Maes has seen the Leviathan state, and it comes in the form of shared bicycles. The local businessman and political novice made national headlines for his dire predictions that conservation measures promoted by his Democratic opponent, Denver Mayor John Hickenlooper, could "threaten our personal freedoms." "At first, I thought, 'Gosh, public transportation, what's wrong with that, and what's wrong with people parking their cars and riding their bikes?'" Maes said. "But if you do your homework … you realize [the policy] is part of a greater strategy to rein in American cities under a United Nations treaty." Maes's spokesperson explained his boss "was trying to say" that biking initiatives are a "gateway" to abortions.

The Winking Extremist: *Ken Buck, Senate candidate, Colorado*

Some Tea Partiers are born believers; others are recent converts to the cause. Buck, a Princeton-educated district attorney and former Justice Department lawyer, has been dubbed "Colorado's Sharron Angle" for his Tea Party–friendly views. But his sincerity was questioned when he was caught on tape calling birthers "dumbasses." After Tom Tancredo called President Obama the biggest threat facing America, Buck was recorded remarking, "I can't believe that guy opened his mouth." He apologized, explaining that the greater peril was "the progressive liberal movement that is going on in this country."

The BP Truther: *Bill Randall, House candidate, North Carolina*

African American Navy veteran Bill Randall has been a hit at Tea Party rallies, defending the movement against charges of racism. But he attracted some unwelcome attention when he claimed that the Gulf oil spill may have been the result of "some sort of collusion" between the government and BP. "Maybe they wanted it to leak, but then it got beyond what was anticipated," he said. Randall allowed that this charge is "not based on any fact," but he's demanded an investigation anyway.

D-Tea Party: *Tim Crawford, House candidate, Indiana*

Longtime GOP congressman Dan Burton memorably shot a pumpkin in his backyard to prove that Vince Foster was murdered, but he's no longer his district's weirdest candidate. That would be Tim Crawford, a self-identified "conservative American" who won the Democratic nomination despite believing that "the amount of 'big government' existing in our nation needs to be reduced" and health care reform is "constitutionally questionable." Some posit that, like South Carolina's Alvin Greene, Crawford won by being first on the ballot. Whatever the explanation, he's had a rocky campaign. At one event, he suggested homosexuality might be a mutation and struggled to explain how a bill becomes law. The 29-year-old construction estimator promised to withdraw, but later changed his mind, saying he was "flustered and felt bullied."

Enhanced Interrogator: *Allen West, House candidate, Florida*

Allen West doesn't like to back down. The former Army lieutenant colonel left the military after an interrogation in Iraq in which he threatened to kill a police officer, then fired a 9mm next to his head to make the threat credible. In his election campaign, West was chided by *The Palm Beach Post* for violent rhetoric, such as calling for his supporters to get out the "bayonets" and to make his opponent "scared to come out of his house." West, who is African American, is no fan of Barack Obama either. He's demanded to know "what passport [Obama used] to go to Pakistan" in 1981 and blasted his administration for failing to stand up to Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and call him a "suck-butt fool."

Border Bomber: *Tom Mullins, House candidate, New Mexico*

New Mexico is one of the states most vulnerable to global warming, but Mullins, an oil engineer, isn't fazed by the alarming projections. Instead, he's accused scientists of falsifying temperature records in a nefarious effort to help politicians who are attempting to regulate "the breath we exhale." He has some unorthodox opinions about immigration, too, at one point suggesting that the U.S. should put land mines on its border with Mexico.

The Rocky Saga: *Andrew Raczkowski, House candidate, Michigan*

Raczkowski likes to be called Rocky and sometimes refers to himself in the third person, but Democrats know him simply as their dream opponent. A law graduate and former state representative, Rocky is the target of a federal lawsuit which alleges his company falsified ticket sales for a motorcycle rally and concert featuring Kiss, Kenny Chesney, and Larry the Cable Guy. He has also eagerly and incoherently embraced several extreme right-wing conspiracy theories. He told one gathering: "You have a president that seems to be, um … well … I don't know if he even has been born in the United States, but … until I see a birth certificate." He later sought to clarify his remarks to *Politico*: "I believe this: He is our president of the United States, he is the president of the United States, and I guess my question is … I would love to see his birth certificate."

God's Operative: *Ed Martin, House candidate, Missouri*

Martin has a rep for fighting dirty: He was forced to resign from his job as chief of staff to former Missouri Governor Matt Blunt after trying to cover up the fact that his office had illegally used state government e-mail accounts for campaign activities. (Martin tried to discredit the government whistleblower who alerted authorities by inquiring whether he was dating anyone in the office.) Now, he's trying to convince Missourians that Obama's domestic agenda is a stealth assault on religious freedom. He told a right-wing radio host that Obama wants to "take away [the choice] to find the Lord." When challenged about these remarks, he insisted that government bailouts made the demise of religious freedom "a growing concern." ◆

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The Revisionaries

The Tea Party's goofy fetish for amending the Constitution.

BRADFORD PLUMER

It seemed unthinkable that Vaughn Ward wouldn't, someday, be a U.S. congressman. The decorated Iraq war vet had been handpicked by national Republicans to run against endangered Democrat Walt Minnick for Idaho's first congressional district. Although he was somewhat gaffe-prone (he had an unfortunate tendency to plagiarize campaign speeches from sources like Barack Obama, for instance), Ward had the boyish good looks, the résumé, and—best of all, for one of the reddest states in the country—Sarah Palin's blessing. All he had to do was win a GOP primary against Raul Labrador, a relatively young state legislator. What could go wrong?

But there was one thing Ward didn't see coming—the Seventeenth Amendment. In late April, both Ward and Labrador went on Idaho public television for a discussion of the race. On the show, a local college professor asked the candidates if they were in favor of repealing the amendment, which allows U.S. senators to be elected directly, rather than appointed by state legislatures. Labrador insisted that yes, he did. Ward seemed slightly taken aback—after all, the question doesn't come up often—but quickly concurred, and even came up with a rationale for scrapping the amendment: "I think that that's been part of the problem of eroding away states' rights, where that body, the Senate, is no longer beholden and tied to the state." For the next two weeks, Idaho's editorial pages mocked Ward for wanting to take away direct elections, until the candidate finally reversed himself, insisting he was only talking about term limits. Yet that brought up a new problem: Idaho's largest Tea Party group savaged Ward for his spinelessness and backed Labrador, who went on to win the GOP primary.

Editorial writers may have found the furor over the Seventeenth Amendment ridiculous, but Tea Partiers took it very seriously. "It was definitely a major factor" in backing Labrador, says Brendan Smythe, president of Tea Party Boise. "It's one of our top issues." Ordinary citizens, the Tea Partiers had decided, lack the ability to keep tabs on dissembling senators. "We have to feed our children, go to soccer games—we don't have time to keep an eye on those guys," explains Smythe. "The ones that can really hold them accountable are the ones who know the games they're playing"—that is, other politicians. In the Progressive era, reformers had come to the opposite conclusion: When senators owed their jobs to other politicians, the result was less transparency and more corruption. In 1899, copper magnate William Clark had famously purchased himself a Montana Senate seat by handing out monogrammed envelopes containing $10,000 in cash. But Tea Partiers took a darker view of those Progressive reformers. "[The Seventeenth Amendment] didn't get adopted until 1913, along with the Sixteenth Amendment, the income tax," says Smythe. "And you also had the institution of the Federal Reserve. So those three acts combined—that was the start of the federal power grab."

A crusade against direct Senate elections may seem like an awfully strange cause, especially for self-styled populists. And yet, across the country, conservatives are turning to this and similarly idiosyncratic readings of the Constitution in an attempt to cure what ails the country. In fact, if you asked most Tea Party adherents—not to mention its theorists—to define the ideology of their movement, they would likely describe their devotion to the Constitution, a document they say successive generations of politicians have trashed in the country's slide toward socialism. Many Tea Partiers view the Constitution in much the same way that fundamentalists regard the Bible, a sacred text whose language is the source of Truth. Groups like Let Freedom Ring are holding public readings of the Constitution around the country. And mainstream conservatives have been nudged to embrace the cause. In February, a number of the movement's luminaries, including Ed Meese and Grover Norquist, penned a statement calling for a "constitutional conservatism" that could unite the right.

But there's something curious about this new constitutional conservatism. At the same time that the Tea Party claims to defend the document against the onslaught of liberals (and their many Republican accomplices), it has grand plans for its renovation. If you listen to this year's crop of congressional candidates, they are full of ideas for adding and subtracting amendments. Repealing the direct election of senators is but one bullet point in the program. Sure, they are unbending originalists. But they are originalists who happen to believe that everything in the document after the Tenth Amendment is fair game for change—and maybe even some annoying bits before that, too.

In early August, talk-show host Glenn Beck brought a couple dozen teenagers onto his show for a freewheeling discussion of all the ways in which America was going downhill. Topics included the separation of church and state and how to tell that Russian President Vladimir Putin hasn't strayed far from his KGB roots. (It's the way he swings only one arm when he walks.) But as Beck paced animatedly about the studio in his tieless suit, it was clear that his real concern was whether kids these days are being educated properly about the Constitution. "Who has been taught that the Declaration of Independence is irrelevant today?" he demanded. "Plays no role in today's society? Just an old dusty document? One, Nicholas has. . . . How about the Constitution? That it's just a relic? Couple of people?" (This is an abiding concern among conservatives—in Michigan, Tea Partiers have been trying to convince schools to let them come in and give their own presentations on the Constitution.)

When I ask Tea Party leaders and organizers who has most influenced their thinking on the Constitution, Beck's name invariably comes up. On his show, Beck constantly warns that the republic is in decline because we've strayed from the principles of the Founding Fathers—principles that, in his view, match perfectly with conservative goals, especially a weak federal government. Take, for instance, his argument against health care: "The Founders could have written it in the original Constitution—they had health care problems back then, too—but they knew the answer was private, not the government." And that, for him, is enough. "The answer is always restore the

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Constitution," he has told his audience, "restore the Founding principles."

Historically, conservatives have often turned to the Constitution when they are out of power and don't like what Congress is doing. The 1930s saw the rise of conservative groups like the American Liberty League, which was fixated on the notion that the New Deal was a dangerous threat to the constitutional order. (The Liberty League was an early predecessor of today's Tea Parties: The 125,000-strong group claimed to be nonpartisan and populist, while receiving plenty of money from wealthy business interests like the Du Pont family.) Alf Landon appealed incessantly to the Constitution during his 1936 presidential campaign against FDR.

This invocation of the Constitution often has religious overtones. In Michigan, one organizer told me that Tea Party members carry around pocket-sized copies of the document—as if it were a talisman of sorts. But Beck is explicit in touting this analogy: He's fond of saying that "God's finger" wrote the Constitution, and he has urged his followers to read *The 5000 Year Leap*, a book written in 1981 by an ultraconservative Mormon, W. Cleon Skousen, who argued that the Constitution has divine origins. The book, Beck says, changed his life. He even wrote the foreword to a version of the tome that was reissued last year—a contribution that undoubtedly helped the book quickly race to number one on Amazon's best-seller list. It should be noted that the Mormon Church was so horrified by Skousen's conspiratorial views—his tendency to scream about Rothschilds and Rockefellers pushing the world toward collectivism—that it officially disavowed him in 1979.

In March, just minutes after Obama had signed health care reform into law, staffers for Virginia Attorney General Ken Cuccinelli dashed up to a federal courthouse in Richmond to file a suit to stop the bill. Earlier in the year, Cuccinelli had appeared before a Tea Party rally in the city's Capitol Square and told attendees, "It's time for people like you all to step up and draw the lines that our Founding Fathers thought they drew very clearly." Now, he was doing just that.

Cuccinelli's legal brief was clever, well-constructed—and deceptively radical. He argued that the newly enacted mandate for individuals to buy health insurance was unconstitutional because, under the Commerce clause, Congress was only allowed to regulate interstate commerce, not "manufacturing or agriculture." As Ian Millhiser, a legal analyst at the Center for American Progress points out, that's not an arbitrary distinction—it was one the Supreme Court made in the years before the New Deal, when it was striking down all sorts of regulations, from minimum-wage laws to bans on child labor. "Cuccinelli is being very explicit about his desire to go back to this pre-1930s era," says Millhiser.

Although Tea Party groups first started invoking the Constitution around the time bank bailouts and stimulus spending were being passed, the craze really flourished after health care reform. Suddenly, conservatives were dusting off every argument they could think of to try to stop the encroachment of the welfare state. Florida Attorney General Bill McCollum joined twelve other states to claim that the Medicaid provisions imposed by the health care bill violated the Tenth Amendment. Virginia and Idaho both claimed the constitutional right to pass "nullification" laws that would prevent the bill from being enacted in their states. And a number of red states have already passed "state sovereignty" resolutions, which, while nonbinding, are essentially notices to the federal government to "cease and desist any and all activities outside the scope of their constitutionally delegated powers."

Taken to the extreme, this "Tenther" philosophy holds that most social programs—including Medicare and Social Security—are unconstitutional. And, as some critics have noted, the vision of government power being promoted by many Tea Party members, in which states can shoot down any laws they don't like, isn't exactly what the Founding Fathers had in mind. "They keep talking about the Constitution, but by weakening the federal government, what they're actually trying to do is go back to the Articles of Confederation," says David Gans of the Constitutional Accountability Center. "And that was a failure—it's what led the Framers to move to the Constitution."

Still, that hasn't stopped conservatives from putting forward creative explanations for why the Constitution forbids social programs they don't like. During the confirmation hearings for Sonia Sotomayor, for instance, Oklahoma Senator Tom Coburn urged the Supreme Court to rein in spending by adopting a narrower reading of the clause in the Constitution that gives Congress the authority to "provide for the … general welfare of the United States." And David Barton, a conservative historian who frequently appears on Beck's shows, has argued that Congress is only allowed to spend money on roads intended for mail travel—even federal highway spending violates the Constitution.

Not all of these arguments appeared out of thin air. Many of them have bobbed around in elite conservative legal circles for years—Clarence Thomas, for instance, seems to largely agree with Cuccinelli's views on the Commerce clause. And yet, while Thomas may fully understand the ramifications of neutering the federal government, it's not always clear that the new generation of grassroots constitutional scholars do. Gene Clem, president of the Southwest Michigan Tea Party Patriots, told me that his group's keen interest in the Constitution came about from a realization that the country had diverged from the Founders' vision around the 1930s. But when I asked him whether that meant we should go back to the days without Social Security or minimum-wage laws, he was quick to demur. "No, no, no, I don't think so," Clem said, before pausing. "I just think we should have an examination of how large government is."

Glenn Beck's constitutional guru, W. Cleon Skousen, argues that the document has divine origins. The Mormon Church was so horrified by Skousen's theories that it disavowed him.

One big problem for Tea Party groups, alas, is that the Supreme Court hasn't been amenable to their reading of the Constitution for quite some time. During the 1970s, conservatives were painfully aware of this fact and so focused instead on proposing a flurry of amendments on everything from school prayer to busing to abortion. It wasn't until Ronald Reagan became president that the right started thinking it could get a favorable hearing on its interpretation of the Constitution by stocking the courts with sympathetic judges.

That tactic worked to some extent—as GOP nominees filled the federal bench during the 1980s and 1990s, the courts gradually tilted rightward. But they never made a serious dent in, for instance,

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Congress's ability to regulate interstate commerce. And so that leads us to the other big feature of the resurgent constitutional conservatism: its revived fetish for amending the Constitution.

Oftentimes, amendment proponents don't sound very originalist. Take, for instance, the push by congressional Republicans to rewrite language in the Fourteenth Amendment that grants automatic citizenship to anyone born in the United States so that it excludes children of undocumented immigrants. When Lindsey Graham discussed this proposal on Fox News, he didn't even bother to appeal to the timeless wisdom of the text. "I'm looking at the laws that exist and see if it makes sense today," he said. "Birthright citizenship doesn't make so much sense when you understand the world as it is."

Then there are amendments to curtail government spending. A new Tea Party coalition, Balanced Budget Amendment Now, has revived calls for an amendment to prevent deficit spending except in times of war or national emergencies. Another popular amendment, which has been put forward by three House Republicans, would limit federal spending to 20 percent of GDP—or slightly below what it was during the Reagan years. "That's hardly draconian," Ken Hagerty of Renewing American Leadership, which is pushing for the amendment, explained to the press. "But it's enough to assure that we keep our republic." Another amendment would require a two-thirds supermajority in the Senate to raise taxes.

One of the most sweeping suggestions is to repeal the Sixteenth Amendment, which gives Congress the power to levy an income tax. Last year, on Beck's show, former New Jersey Superior Court Judge Andrew Napolitano called for a constitutional convention (which would require the approval of two-thirds of the states) for this idea: "If that were enacted, it would starve the federal government back into the original footprint that the Founders intended for it." Beck excitedly ran with the ball: "[I]f there is a serious movement in the public to push for this, it threatens [Congress's] very existence." The idea has since been echoed by Nevada Senate candidate Sharron Angle and a variety of Tea Party groups.

Meanwhile, efforts to scuttle the Seventeenth Amendment and the direct election of senators keep gathering steam. Texas Representative Louis Gohmert, for one, has called for a repeal measure in the House. But the issue frequently seems to get Republicans in trouble: A few months after Vaughn Ward's blunder in Idaho, Colorado Senate candidate Ken Buck had to backpedal on his own support for repeal. Back in 2009, Buck had launched into a tirade on "just what a horrendous effect the Seventeenth Amendment has been on the federal government's spending." Yet when recently pressed by a *Huffington Post* reporter about it, Buck insisted that he no longer held that view—and, in fact, after some reflection had changed his mind the day after the original speech.

The Tea Party enthusiasm for amendments has resulted in a kind of arms race, where Republican contenders attempt to extol the largest number of changes to the Constitution.

The enthusiasm for such amendments has resulted in a kind of arms race, where Republican primary contenders attempt to extol the largest number of constitutional changes. In mid-August, the Baton Rouge Tea Party hosted a debate between Jeff Landry and Kristian Magar, two of the candidates jockeying to be the GOP nominee in Louisiana's third congressional district. As the applause surged louder and louder, both candidates tried to outdo each other: abolish the Sixteenth and Seventeenth, amend the Fourteenth, issue long paeans to the Ninth and Tenth Amendments. Magar had a leg up in this competition. He had signed a pledge drafted by the Tenth Amendment Center, which includes this vow: "When Congress enacts laws and regulations that are not made in Pursuance of the powers enumerated in the Constitution, the People are not bound to obey them."

Read literally, the Tea Party strategy is one grand delusion. Enacting a constitutional amendment, after all, would require the assent of two-thirds of the House and Senate, *plus* the approval of three-fourths of state legislatures. These days, it's almost impossible to find 60 votes in the Senate for a minuscule jobs bill. It's difficult to imagine an even larger number of senators signing up to, say, suddenly make their jobs contingent on the whims of a bunch of state legislators by axing the Seventeenth Amendment. What's more, the Tea Party amendments don't seem to be especially resonant outside the ranks of the movement. A recent poll by Penn Schoen Berland found that if most Americans were given the chance to amend the Constitution, they'd focus on bolstering gender equality and abolishing the Electoral College, not striking down the income tax.

Still, that doesn't mean an amendment push is inconsequential. Take the proposed Equal Rights Amendment from the 1970s. That effort eventually died in state legislatures. But, as Yale law professor Reva Siegel has argued, the drive for the amendment, and the debate it fostered, left a huge imprint on legal doctrine. Many of the ideas about gender equality in the amendment have been more or less adopted by the courts. "Efforts to amend the Constitution create an occasion for people to organize and talk to their representatives—it creates this focal point in politics," says Siegel. And, in the process, cultural values are reshaped in ways that ultimately influence the courts.

Of course, that's not likely to happen with a push to repeal the Seventeenth Amendment—no amount of discussion will persuade future courts that the direct election of senators isn't really permitted. But what about the effort to amend the birthright citizenship clause of the Fourteenth Amendment? It's possible the GOP crusade could nudge the boundaries of the immigration debate further rightward. Lawmakers could try to look for ways to constrict birthright citizenship—there's already a move to deny birth certificates to children of undocumented immigrants—and the courts could, over time, give these efforts a more favorable ear. With enough momentum, even a wild idea can inch toward the mainstream.

Glenn Beck, for one, seems to understand exactly how the process works. Amid monologues that often stray from political reality, he occasionally flashes self-awareness. During one discussion on his show about the prospects of repealing the Sixteenth Amendment (and, hence, the income tax), he paused and said, "I mean, it sounds ridiculous. You get two-thirds of the states. . . . Because the income tax, you can't, in Massachusetts you can't get them to say no to it, and so it sounds ridiculous." Then he steadied himself and seemed to say with a wink, "But again, it's a serious movement and would force them to move. It doesn't even have to pass." ◆

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Will peace ever be possible under those conditions?

After more than sixty years of statehood, Israel is a lone outpost of Western civilization and its values. It is the staunchest ally of the United States in that part of the world – a bulwark of democracy. The Arab nations surrounding it are a swamp of terrorism, corruption, dictatorship, and human enslavement. But the hatred of the Arabs against Israel and against all Jews is so abiding and so virulent that peace, at least for the foreseeable future, seems unattainable and most unlikely.

What are the facts?

No "sacrifice" will overcome the hatred. There are those who still believe that the never-ending conflict between the Arabs and the Jews could be settled if the Israelis were willing to bring greater "sacrifices for peace." Such "sacrifices" would include relinquishing ever-larger portions of their tiny country (less than half the size of San Bernardino County in California) to the Palestinians, dismantling the "settlements" in Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank"), handing the Golan Heights to Syria, and allowing the "return of the refugees," a group that has grown miraculously from about 500,000 to somewhere around 5 million. The absorption of even a substantial fraction of them would signify the demographic end of the Jewish states.

> "Israel's only course...is to assume its previous stance of unflinching deterrence...and not to be inhibited...to preempt resolutely if it appears necessary to assure survival of the country."

Israel, ill-advisedly, vacated Gaza. It was rewarded with daily barrages of Qassam rockets. In the north, after Israel had abandoned its southern Lebanon buffer zone, Hizbollah (the "Army of God") launched the second "Lebanon War." It must now be clear to even the most confirmed "doves" that nothing that Israel could do, any further "sacrifice" that Israel would be prepared to bring, would satisfy the Arabs. The sad but irrefutable conclusion is that only the complete disappearance of Israel, the excision of this "cancer" could satisfy the Arabs and most of the Muslim world.

Mortal hatred and the "Big Lie." The "Big Lie," invented by the notorious Joseph Goebbels of Nazi infamy, is a mainstay of Arab hatred and propaganda. In Egypt and Jordan (the two Arab countries technically at peace with Israel), government-controlled news sources published that Israel had distributed drug-laced chewing gum and candy to kill children and to make women sexually corrupt. The Jews (Israelis) are being accused of having introduced foot-and-mouth disease in the Middle East. The age-old calumny of Jews using the blood of Christian and Muslim children in order to bake their Passover matzos is alive and well in Arab publications. Translations of Adolf Hitler's "Mein Kampf" and the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion" are steady best-sellers in all Arab countries. Among other malevolent fabrications, it accuses "international Jewry" of "limitless ambition, inexhaustible greed, and hatred beyond imagination." Schools, streets and plazas are named after notorious murderers of Jews.

In the controlled Arab press, Holocaust denial and accusation of the Zionists having been in cahoots with the German Nazis are regular features. Egypt's government-sponsored *Al Akhbar* newspaper has expressed fervent thanks to Adolf Hitler for having taken advance revenge on the "vilest criminals on the face of the earth." Still, it berated him for not having been thorough enough in his task of extermination. The Arabs do not consider Israel a normal country, but a creation of the devil, an excrescence, a malignant force of aggressors, murderers, infidels and barbarians. It should be destroyed, for the glory of God, no matter what sacrifices that might entail.

Mortal hatred against Israel and against the Jews is taught to Arab children from the very first grade. Children are encouraged to sacrifice themselves as martyrs and to become suicide bombers and human missiles, with promises that Paradise with unimaginable pleasures awaits those who sacrifice themselves in the holy cause of killing Jews.

This bottomless hatred, a hatred that pervades the Arab world in all strata of society and is incessantly fomented by Arab governments, including those supposed to be "at peace" with Israel, cannot be assuaged by negotiation or by making any further "sacrifices for peace." Nothing will suffice, except the destruction of Israel. The Arab states, having been unable in over sixty years and in many wars to defeat and exterminate the Jews, are now feverishly arming themselves with "conventional weapons" (easily purchased from the West, including, sad to say, from the United States), and are ardently pursuing the development of weapons of mass annihilation. Just as the suicide bombers do not vacillate to sacrifice themselves, one can safely expect that, once in possession of such weapons, the Arabs will not hesitate to sacrifice millions of their own people in order to destroy Israel. Israel's only course in the face of this almost certain prospect is to assume its previous stance of unflinching deterrence and, as it once did in the destruction of the Iraqi atomic reactor at Osirak in 1981, not to be inhibited by "international opinion" to preempt resolutely if it appears necessary to assure survival of the country.

This message has been published and paid for by

FLAME

Facts and Logic About the Middle East
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Executive Indecision

Obama and the CEOs: He loves them, he loves them not.

MICHELLE COTTLE

White House senior adviser Valerie Jarrett would like to make one thing exceedingly clear: The Obama administration is not bad for business. No way. No how. Not one little bit. "We are *not* anti-business," the president's chief liaison to the business community stresses to me over the phone one afternoon in late July, an edge of frustration ruffling her usually calm-as-cream voice. "Our goal is to foster an environment where companies invest and innovate and grow and expand their employment base in a way that will be good for the country *and* good for business."

Former CEO of the Habitat Company, a Chicago real-estate development and management firm, Jarrett is particularly unmoved by the oft-voiced business complaint that this White House lacks private-sector veterans. "I've been the head of a company," she says. "I've sat on publicly held boards." But managing a national economy is a vastly different proposition, she observes. Reminding me of the bleak economic conditions under which Obama assumed office, she briskly ticks through a number of dramatic steps "boldly and decisively" taken to stop the bleeding and start the healing. Naturally, she allows, there has been some tension surrounding the new "rules of the road"—a favorite Obamaland catchphrase—being put in place to prevent future meltdowns. But, "from day one," Jarrett asserts, this White House has maintained an open-door policy with business. She points in particular to the private luncheons Obama hosts with small groups of executives and similar dinners presided over by Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner. "We have," she says, "spent a great deal of time and energy reaching out broadly."

None of this, however, seems to have satisfied the business community, which has spent the past few months locked in an increasingly public squabble with the administration. In June, the Business Roundtable (BRT)—an association of CEOs from some of America's largest companies, and a group previously regarded as pro-Obama—joined its sister organization, the Business Council, in rolling out an exhaustive 54-page report on "government initiatives that will cause slower rather than faster growth." (Taxes and regulation were, unsurprisingly, top concerns.) The next day, Verizon CEO Ivan Seidenberg, BRT chairman and frequent White House visitor, appeared before the Economic Club of Washington and groused that, "by reaching into virtually every sector of economic life, government is injecting uncertainty into the marketplace and making it harder to raise capital and create new businesses." In July, the Chamber of Commerce—whose relations with this White House have been rocky—sponsored a "Jobs for America" summit devoted to slamming administration policies. Other executives, meanwhile, stepped up to decry the president's vilification of business, pointing to his tough talk about Wall Street and health insurers. Even targeted comments, like Interior Secretary Ken Salazar's pledge to "keep the boot on the neck of British Petroleum" and Obama's assertion that "I know whose ass to kick" over the oil spill, were widely received as assaults on the broader community. "All of business is getting tarred with the same brush," laments Honeywell CEO David Cote, a repeat invitee to Obama's closed-door chats.

And so the Obama administration finds itself in a vexing position. Corporate America—having helped to spike cap-and-trade and water down the financial regulation and health care bills—is running around loudly charging that the White House is out to get the private sector. At the same time, hard-won compromises on key policy goals have convinced some of Obama's liberal base that he is a corporation-coddling sellout. Alas, the president's efforts to communicate with the public about economic matters seem to satisfy almost no one: Alternately sounding like an outraged populist and a free-market cheerleader, his balancing act serves mostly to confuse people. He is bashed simultaneously as a market-hating socialist and as a bloodless elitist, uninterested in the suffering of regular Americans. This betwixt-and-between stance may be in keeping with Obama's trademark brand of thoughtful, noncommittal pragmatism, but, when it comes to the economy, it seems to be winning him the worst of both worlds.

As some see it, this summer's go-round between the White House and the business community all started with the president's May 4 address to the Business Council. It shouldn't have been a formal address at all, really. The Business Council is a collegial, collaborative bunch, a self-described "educational and deliberative forum" composed of CEOs from some of America's most formidable corporations. Their gatherings tend to be high-level bull sessions—no staff allowed—at which captains of industry sit around swapping insights on policy, politics, and the frequently fraught interplay between business and government.

With all the economic drama of late, Obama wanted to connect with council chieftains at their annual gathering in Washington. But rather than stroll into the Park Hyatt ready to rub elbows and talk strategy, the president came with a teleprompter and a prepared speech that was more lecture than invitation to engage. He said his piece, took no questions, and decamped with impolitic alacrity—leaving behind a roomful of disgruntled chief executives still anxious about the White House's policy aims and unaccustomed to such high-handed treatment. Far from feeling courted, or even understood, some members felt they'd been used as props.

The grumbling was still going strong when Treasury Secretary Geithner made his appearance later that day. He solicited questions, indulged in some back-and-forth, and attempted to soothe some dander, but to no avail. Nor were dispositions sunnier when Peter Orszag, then chief of the Office of Management and Budget, showed up at dinner that evening. The mealtime chatter, recalls one attendee, was "very feisty."

At some point, sitting down with Seidenberg, Orszag suggested that the BRT and Business Council put their concerns down on paper. What followed was the combative joint report—and it was all downhill from there. As the financial

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reform bill rumbled toward passage, simmering doubts about the administration's grasp of, and attitude toward, business erupted in a flurry of critical speeches, letters, op-eds, and media appearances. Obama officials, in turn, suggested business was being overly sensitive, unrealistic in its demands, and more than a little ungrateful for all that government had done to stave off an economic apocalypse. News reports outlined various industries' plans to punish Democrats by flooding Republican campaign coffers for the upcoming midterms. By mid-July, the media was awash in hand-wringing about the animosity between the White House and corporate America. For a president grappling with an unemployment rate near 10 percent, this was not a welcome storyline.

Beyond any specific areas of disagreement, a broader problem, it seems, is that the White House cannot decide how it wants to deal with business—especially now that the relationship has hit a rough patch. On the one hand, the administration has lately been lavishing its corporate allies with even more attention than usual. Jarrett and other top players have sought input from favored CEOs such as Motorola's Greg Brown and Honeywell's Cote. Commerce Secretary Gary Locke invited a whole passel of executives to his office to discuss policy and politics. The Sage of Omaha, billionaire Warren Buffett, dropped by the White House for a tête-à-tête with Obama (much-publicized and complete with official photo). Geithner hit the chat shows (with deliberate attention to business-centric venues like CNBC) and jetted up to New York to personally address financial types; his deputies were dispatched to other financial hot spots such as Boston, Chicago, and Charlotte for similar talks. "I wouldn't call it a charm offensive, but it was a deliberate effort to go out on taxes and say what we're for," explains an administration official. "It was mostly aimed at putting to rest concerns that there was some grand new wave of things coming."

Meanwhile, the White House has sought to shift the spotlight onto trade—an area seen by both administration and business leaders as ripe for compromise. In a July 7 appearance, Obama reiterated his State of the Union commitment to doubling U.S. exports over the next five years, gave an update on his National Export Initiative, and announced that he was "re-launching" his export council—stacked with dazzling executive types, of course. Message: See, we really do get along.

Yet, amid all the efforts to cultivate goodwill, administration officials have continued to let their exasperation with business show through. "Rather than respond to atmospherics, they should look at policies where we have been supportive," White House chief of staff Rahm Emanuel admonished in a July 8 interview with *Politico*. Despite all the woo being pitched at the export event, the president raised hackles when he asserted that, "in the absence of sound oversight, responsible businesses are forced to compete against unscrupulous and underhanded businesses, who are unencumbered by any restrictions on activities that might harm the environment, or take advantage of middle-class families, or threaten to bring down the entire financial system." An incensed Mort Zuckerman, real-estate mogul and owner of *U.S. News & World Report*, promptly churned out a column denouncing "this kind of gratuitous and overstated demonization of business." Says a trade association lobbyist of the administration's rhetoric, "It's kind of one step forward and two steps back." One White House adviser e-mailed me snippets from a 1993 press conference by the National Federation of Independent Business, predicting economic devastation if President Clinton's tax plan passed. Message: See, these guys always whine about everything.

After Obama's speech, the mealtime chatter among business leaders, recalls one attendee, was "very feisty."

Even Jarrett, whose portfolio revolves around making sure the business community feels loved and listened to, can sound as though her patience is wearing thin. Noting that a key part of her job is educating business leaders about the tough choices the president and his economic team must make, she recounts how, when the White House has brought in executives to talk taxes and budget and deficits, many of them have wound up telling her, "Boy this is really hard. I see now why you have a huge challenge here." She is quick to draw distinctions between helpful and unhelpful actors, stressing that those mouthing off do not speak for everyone. And she has not concealed her irritation with the Chamber of Commerce. A pointed July 14 letter she and Emanuel sent to the Chamber expressed how "surprised and disappointed" they were by some of the recent rhetoric and scolded that the "stakes are far too high for us to be working against one another."

Ultimately, many key players in this administration, including Obama himself, may simply be of two minds when it comes to business. Despite the White House's professed respect for the private sector as economic engine, there's also a clear attitude among some officials that the business community is a bunch of demanding, slightly unruly teenagers who don't appreciate the grown-up responsibilities of running a country. Multiple officials express variations on the theme that, while business leaders' jobs are to advance the fortunes of their companies, the president must safeguard the interests of the entire nation. There is, in the words of one Democratic strategist, "a cultural dissonance" at work here.

Complicating matters, the politics don't suggest any obvious way for the administration to unmuddle its stance. Obama can't drift too far into populist territory without lending credence to the idea, flogged by Republicans, that he is some kind of radical socialist. But neither can he be perceived as scurrying to make peace with corporate fat cats—a move that would both infuriate his base and send a more general signal of weakness. "We are not reactionary," one insider stressed to me, emphatically and repeatedly. "We are not changing outreach plans due to this recent flare-up." "Once you start down the road of making business the bogeyman, it's hard to walk back from that," says the trade association lobbyist. "But as a Democrat trying to keep together his coalition, maybe that's a good place to be."

Now, with the midterms just two months away, some people are questioning whether the White House should bother putting any effort into this dysfunctional relationship at all. "I don't think anything will honestly happen before the election to change the dynamic," says one administration official. "The business community by and large is sitting and waiting and hoping that we learn a lesson in the election." With polls foretelling a grim outcome for the Democrats, business is clearly hoping the lesson will be: Stop splitting the difference and defer to us—or there's more where that came from. ◆

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The Velvet Surrender

Russia reconquers the Czechs.

GREGORY FEIFER AND BRIAN WHITMORE

Václav Klaus, the president of the Czech Republic, is legendary for his lack of manners. When his country assumed the rotating presidency of the European Union in 2009, Klaus—a stocky and vigorous man with close-cropped white hair and a fastidiously trimmed moustache—got into a scrap with a group of European politicians because he had refused to fly the EU flag above his office in Prague Castle. Nicolas Sarkozy pronounced the snub "hurtful," yet Klaus was anything but contrite. Instead, he used his first address to the European Parliament to compare the EU to the Soviet Union. Tales of his unsubtle jabs at his political opponents are legion. Visiting the United States during the 2008 presidential campaign, Klaus, known and embraced by many Western conservatives as a fellow partisan, remarked to a reporter that he assumed Barack Obama wasn't much of a beer man but "might drink those, how do you say? . . . piña coladas." His predecessor, Václav Havel, worked with him for many years and in his memoir described him variously as "utterly unbearable," "this annoying fellow," and "radiating a negative energy." The British historian Timothy Garton Ash called Klaus "one of the rudest men I have ever met."

Yet even by Klaus's standards, the fuss he kicked up over the Lisbon Treaty was impolitic. It was October 2009, and after eight numbing years of negotiations and referenda, every EU member had signed the agreement that would give the organization a president. Every country, that is, except the Czech Republic. Its parliament had approved the treaty, and Klaus was required by law to sign it. But he was refusing to answer his telephone.

Instead, Klaus chose that moment to travel to Moscow to promote his latest book, itself a middle finger directed at the European consensus. *Blue Planet in Green Shackles* dismisses man-made climate change as a myth and claims that the greatest threat to freedom in the twenty-first century is the "ambitious, arrogant, unscrupulous ideology of environmentalism." While European officials fretted and fumed, Klaus was received in style at the Kremlin. For weeks, it appeared as if the entire European project could be derailed by a single obstinate politician with a continent-sized chip on his shoulder.

Klaus eventually signed the treaty, and many of his critics assumed he'd been holding the accord hostage in a crude play for publicity. But among close observers, his trip to Moscow raised eyebrows for another reason: He appeared to be acting in Russia's interests—and not for the first time.

An economist by training, Klaus, who is 69 years old, has served as prime minister or president for all but five years of the Czech Republic's life span. A zealous free-marketer—he has been called the "Margaret Thatcher of Central Europe"—he oversaw the transformation of a centrally planned economy into one of the former Soviet bloc's most successful markets, before emerging as the leader of the right-wing Civic Democratic Party. Nevertheless, ever since the Czechs shook off the communist yoke, Klaus has come down on Moscow's side in almost every major political debate.

As prime minister in the 1990s, he reportedly pushed hard for his country to sign oil and gas agreements with Russia. In 1999, he bucked Havel to join the Kremlin in rebuking NATO for bombing Serbia. Almost a decade later, as president, he refused to condemn Russia's invasion of Georgia. The Russian energy giant Lukoil paid for his book's translation into Russian. His recalcitrance over the Lisbon Treaty put Klaus on the Kremlin's side yet again, this time in line with one of Moscow's fundamental foreign policy goals: fracturing European unity.

Klaus has supported Moscow so consistently over the years that a well-worn joke in Prague has it that he has been a secret Russian agent all along. These days, such jibes are tinged with more than a little unease. That's because Klaus is not the only Czech politician whose interests have drifted closer to Russia's. More than 20 years after the end of communism, over four decades after the Red Army extinguished the Prague Spring, the Czech Republic is again in danger of falling under Moscow's shadow. This time, the threat comes not from Russia's tanks, but from its creeping dominance of the global energy market. Russian energy interests are financing Czech political parties and seeking to dominate entire sectors of the country's energy industry—and, in the process, undermining the last 20 years of hard-won post-communist history.

Thanks to the baroque splendors of its central core, Prague has become a popular tourist destination, although much of the city remains surprisingly gritty, slow to shed its communist past. But above the curving Vltava River, near the looming castle immortalized by Franz Kafka, villas line the leafy streets of one of Prague's most charming neighborhoods. Here, Russian companies operate inside ornate mansions, grocery shops sell delicacies from the motherland, and one often hears Russian spoken in the streets. Nearby is the Russian embassy, inside a sprawling palace that also houses a Russian Orthodox church and at least 60 Russian intelligence officers and agents, according to the Czech intelligence service, BIS. In June, the agency warned of an "aggressive" Russian espionage campaign in the Czech Republic, one that was increasingly zeroing in on the energy sector.

Unlike the recent U.S.-Russian spy scandal, this is serious business. Russia has the largest energy reserves in the world and, after Vladimir Putin was elected in 2000, Moscow began an aggressive push into European oil and gas markets. Putin started seizing back the energy assets that the government had privatized in the 1990s, and, before long, some of the most powerful Russian energy players were practically indistinguishable from the state. Putin saw the means to pursue his long-cherished goal of restoring Russia to the ranks of the great powers, which he had outlined in his doctoral thesis. The logic was simple: The more countries depended on Russia for their energy needs, the more leverage Russia would have over them. Moscow initially set its sights close to home, on the Eastern and Central European countries it had once controlled, and where it could still draw on a network of useful connections.

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Czech President Václav Klaus has sided with Moscow in almost every major political debate.

Instrumental to this effort was a handful of Russian energy giants either owned by or closely aligned with the government. In the natural-gas industry, the most powerful player is Gazprom, the most profitable company in the world and the single largest contributor to the Russian national budget. (The state owns a controlling stake, and the current Russian president, Dmitri Medvedev, was the chairman of its board until 2008.) Over the past decade, Gazprom and other Russian firms have seeded a number of firms in the Czech Republic, connected via an impenetrable web of shell companies around Europe. BIS concluded in its 2009 annual report, "It is highly likely the complex ownership structure is aimed at camouflaging links to the Russian Federation."

One example is Vemex, a purportedly Czech firm that sells Russian natural gas. Since it emerged in 2001, seemingly from nowhere, it has captured around 10 percent of the Czech retail gas market. Its ownership structure is essentially indecipherable. To wit: Vemex is owned by companies based in Switzerland, Germany, and Austria, one of which is Centrex Europe Energy & Gas, which was founded by Gazprom's financing arm and registered in Austria, and, according to the European Commission, owned by two companies, one registered in Cyprus and another controlled by Gazprom's German subsidiary.

Between these kinds of shadowy entities and major contracts with companies like Gazprom and Lukoil, the Czech

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Republic relies on Russia for nearly 80 percent of its natural gas. "A lot of Russian firms are under the influence of the state, especially in the energy sector," Karel Schwarzenberg, a pipe-smoking Habsburg prince and leader of a center-right party called TOP 09, said in an interview earlier this year. (Schwarzenberg has since become the foreign minister.) "And Russia is increasingly turning into an authoritarian state. There's always a danger that economic influence turns into political influence."

Czech politics are a messy and opaque affair, even at the best of times. This year, elections brought to power a center-right coalition, headed by the Civic Democratic Party and including TOP 09, after the previous center-right coalition collapsed. The new prime minister, Petr Nečas, has vowed to fight the widespread corruption that critics say Russia has ably exploited. So did the previous prime minister, Mirek Topolánek, under whose leadership the Russian presence flourished.

On the right, Klaus's sympathies are assured: He was key to Lukoil's expansion in the country, according to Czech media, meeting in secret with the company's CEO. Schwarzenberg, the foreign minister, is an outspoken critic of Russia, but in the ruling coalition, he is somewhat of an outlier. Russia also has powerful friends on the left. Earlier this year, *Respekt*, a well-regarded investigative magazine, reported that Lukoil was financing the new left-wing Citizens Rights Party, headed by a popular former prime minister, Miloš Zeman. The party denies the accusations, but admits taking money from Russian-linked lobbyists, such as Miroslav Šlouf, a former communist youth leader and Zeman's longtime chief adviser. Zeman, a blunt, hard-drinking pol who hopes to succeed Klaus as president, bridled at questions about his connections to lobbyists. "Let me give you a lesson in political science," he said. "They're engaged in a respectable job." Lukoil and other Russian companies declined to give interviews, but Sergei Mikoyan, the Prague-based representative of the Russian Chamber of Commerce, said that Lukoil is simply seeking to grow its business like any other company.

According to *Respekt*'s Jaroslav Spurny, one of the country's most prominent investigative journalists, Lukoil has set its sights on acquiring the Czech Republic's only non-Russian source of oil by gaining control of the pipeline that brings in supplies via Germany. "That would make us fully dependent on Russian oil again," Spurny said, "which would mean a kind of dictatorship."

Elsewhere in the former Soviet bloc, Russia's massive energy resources have given it significant sway. Bulgaria gets about 90 percent of its gas from Russia; Slovakia is 100 percent dependent; and Gazprom controls Serbia's entire oil and gas industry. In the winters of 2006 and 2009, Gazprom shut down the flow of gas to Ukraine—accounting for two-thirds of its domestic energy—ostensibly because of a pricing dispute. But it was hard not to notice that the row flared soon after Ukraine's Orange Revolution—which produced the country's first-ever pro-Western government—and that Russia's energy policy suddenly softened after Ukrainians elected a pro-Moscow president this year. In April, Russia slashed natural-gas prices for Ukraine by about 30 percent, and Kiev agreed that Moscow could maintain a naval fleet in the country until 2042. A few months later, Ukraine dropped NATO membership from its foreign policy agenda.

At least 60 Russian intelligence agents operate inside a palace in Prague, part of an aggressive espionage campaign that has zeroed in on the energy sector.

AMID THE EUPHORIA following the Velvet Revolution in December 1989, Václav Havel delivered one of his most memorable speeches. The most harmful legacy of communism, he said, was not the ravaged economy, or even the political repression that had occurred, but rather the "contaminated moral environment" that had overcome the country. "Our main enemy today is our own bad traits: indifference to the common good, vanity, personal ambition, selfishness, and rivalry," he continued. "The main struggle will have to be fought on this field." His Civic Forum Party promised a transparent, democratic government and to return Czechoslovakia to the West. It was a popular message. More than 95 percent of the population participated in the first free elections in 1990, which the Civic Forum won decisively. (Czechoslovakia split into the Czech and Slovak republics in 1993.) That the Czech Republic now appears poised to dismantle some of the gains of its peaceful revolution seems truly mystifying.

After the inaugural elections, Klaus spearheaded a period of rapid privatization—first as finance minister in the Civic Forum Party, and then as prime minister of his right-wing splinter Civic Democratic Party. At first, the results were impressive. But critics soon pointed out that Klaus had focused only on stripping controls from the economy, without devoting equal attention to building strong democratic institutions and a sound legal system. Without such safeguards, the corruption that had been a way of life under the old system permeated the new Czech Republic. In 1997, Klaus himself was forced to resign after his government was brought down by a campaign finance scandal. Shortly afterward, Havel delivered a blistering speech in parliament in which he indirectly criticized Klaus for taking the transition from communism only halfway. As a result, he said, an increasing number of Czechs "are disgusted with politics."

Despite Havel's entreaties, corruption has continued to color Czech life in ways large and small. Lack of competition and mandatory bribes and kickbacks to officials drive up prices in every layer of the economy. Although the country remains poor by Western European standards, basic goods and services cost more here than in many wealthier EU nations. (Last year, Transparency International ranked the Czech Republic as one of the worst EU countries on its corruption perceptions index.) The major anti-corruption drive promised by the new government appears to have run into trouble: Already, the opposition has blocked a proposal to prevent anonymously owned companies from winning large public contracts.

In short, Czechs are jaded about their government, with the heady idealism that followed the Velvet Revolution now a distant memory. And so, even though many Czechs remain suspicious of Russia—older people who know Russian often refuse to even speak the language of their former oppressors—apathy and cynicism, rather than any conscious policy choice, have enabled Moscow to muscle in. Václav Bartuska, who was, until June, the government's envoy for energy security, believes the country has

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reached a decisive turning point. "We can go the way of Ukraine, a phony democracy with a few people who are rich," he said. "Or we can go back and try to be a normal boring European country in which law is law."

In the region of South Bohemia, an hour south of Prague by car, four smooth, gray cooling towers loom over miles of flat, green farmland. This is the Temelin nuclear power plant, which generates 10 percent of the country's electricity. About 60 percent is produced by coal, but the Czech Republic is phasing out its oldest and most polluting coal facilities. The plan is to make up the shortfall by building two reactors at Temelin, and possibly more elsewhere. The contract will be one of the biggest business deals in Czech history and will pit the pro-Russian forces in Czech politics against those fighting to keep the country oriented toward the West.

Three companies are expected to bid for the Temelin contract, which is worth as much as $30 billion: Westinghouse (a U.S.-based division of Toshiba), Areva of France, and a Russian state-controlled company called Atomstroyexport. Atomstroyexport oversees foreign projects for Russia's nuclear energy ministry and is widely expected to submit the lowest offer. If awarded the bid, it has promised to subcontract up to 70 percent of the construction work to Czech companies, but this pledge isn't exactly on the level: A Russian state-controlled industrial conglomerate owns the Czech nuclear engineering firm that would be the main beneficiary of the subcontracted work.

Initially, the decision over the Temelin reactors was to be made by CEZ, the state power giant that owns the plant. There is perhaps no better illustration of the cloudy boundary between government and business in the Czech Republic. CEZ is the largest utility in Central and Eastern Europe, and contributes funds to both major political parties. In May, the Green Party alleged that CEZ stands at the center of "a network of mutual dependency and kickbacks" that includes "courts, police, prosecutors, regional governments and political parties"—a point that is so unsurprising to Czechs that some wryly refer to their country as the "CEZ Republic."

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Then Bartuska, the energy envoy, got involved. CEZ was far too vulnerable to Russian influence-peddling, he argued, and this would give Atomstroyexport a dangerous advantage. In his airy office in the seventeenth-century palace that houses the foreign ministry, Bartuska, who had been a student leader in the Velvet Revolution, explained his reasoning. "Russian companies export corruption," he said bluntly. One example is an $80 million contract awarded by the government last year to build a storage facility at Temelin for spent nuclear fuel. The winning bid was submitted by CEEI, a company that is believed to be Russian-controlled—its ownership structure is typically labyrinthine. Even more alarming, one of its directors was sentenced to prison last year for trying to kidnap another in an alleged extortion attempt. "It's a civilization choice," Bartuska concluded. Thanks to his lobbying, the Temelin decision will be made by the government, not CEZ.

Jiri Kominek, an analyst with the Jamestown Foundation, says Moscow is putting "unprecedented" lobbying pressure on the Czech government, and Klaus has already endorsed Atomstroyexport, although he has no formal role in the process. Vice President Joe Biden advocated for Westinghouse when he visited Prague last winter, but pro-Western politicians in Prague say the United States has been slow to grasp Temelin's significance. (The American embassy in Prague and officials in Washington declined interview requests.) "I don't think they care a bloody damn about us," said Schwarzenberg.

Among the former states in the Soviet bloc, the Czech Republic has always been one of America's staunchest allies. In the republic's early years, the relationship was particularly warm: Czechs remembered that Americans had supported the dissidents and took note when Havel addressed Congress to a series of standing ovations. More recently, the Czech government was one of a small handful of European countries to support the invasion of Iraq. But as Moscow's influence has grown, it has gained new power with which to oppose American policy goals. Recently, Russia successfully rallied public opinion against the construction of a radar base in the Czech Republic that was to have been part of the U.S. missile-defense shield. And it has pressured other European countries, such as Germany, to oppose putting former Soviet republics on a path to NATO membership. "It's still a power game," said the former Green Party leader, Martin Bursík. "It's still a battle between NATO and Russia."

Václav Havel is now 73 years old. Since leaving the presidency, he has maintained an energetic schedule of speaking and writing—his latest project is a film version of one of his plays, which is widely seen as an exploration of his relationship with Václav Klaus. Perhaps for this reason, the policies pushed by his old arch-rival seem to be weighing heavily on his mind.

Twenty years ago, Havel stood at the center of an extraordinary historic moment. The Czech people, who had for so long been beaten down by the Soviet regime, decided that they wanted something different for their country—an open society, free from foreign control. Inspiring and channeling this outpouring was the great achievement of Havel's life, and over the past year he has been repeatedly warning, in speeches and letters and public appearances, that it is in danger of slipping away.

Last year, as Czechs took to the streets for the Velvet Revolution's twentieth anniversary, Havel refrained from jubilation. "The era of dictatorships and totalitarian systems hasn't ended," he said in a speech. He also led a group of prominent Central and Eastern European politicians that published an open letter to President Obama warning of a "growing sense of nervousness" in Central and Eastern Europe. "All is not well either in our region or in the transatlantic relationship," the letter said. It described Russia's "overt and covert means of economic warfare" against former Soviet states, and concluded, "The threat to energy supplies can exert an immediate influence on our nations' political sovereignty, also as allies contributing to common decisions in NATO."

Havel emphasized this point in an interview. Russian state-controlled and private enterprises, he said, are "undoubtedly influencing the behavior of various Czech political parties and politicians. I've seen several cases where the influence started quietly and slowly began projecting onto our foreign policy." He added, with characteristic gravity and a touch of understatement, "I can only advise great caution." ◆

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Stanley Kauffmann on Films
THROUGH THE YEARS

A film about a child that is not intended to charm us is brave. *The Girl*, from Sweden, scorns the idea of charm and bravely concentrates on the life of a nine-year-old simply as a life. (We don't even learn her name.) We are left at the end with a sense of experience, not some sort of benevolence.

She is the daughter of a young couple who live in a pleasant country house. They do a sort of social work and are off to Africa on a mission with their daughter. In fact, the first thing we see is the girl getting a vaccination. At nearly the last moment, word comes that the couple can't take their daughter with them. Disappointments and apologies flow, and luckily, an aunt is available to come and stay with the girl during the parents' absence. At least the girl's swimming lessons will now be able to continue.

Karin Arrhenius, who wrote the screenplay, has provided a series of incidents that are—with two exceptions—recognizable yet interesting. Fredrik Edfeldt, who directed, has chosen a girl named Blanca Engström who is completely credible rather than winning, and with the aid of Hoyte Van Hoytema's camera, he has laced his film with landscapes, even still lifes, that suffuse it with loveliness. (The girl, like most dwellers in lovely places, takes the beauty for granted.)

After the parents leave, she goes to swimming class one day. Each of the children is asked to dive and does so, except our girl, who doesn't. This is a possible hint of a response to being left behind by her parents. Then, unexpectedly but somehow not shockingly to the girl, the aunt in charge soon proves peculiar. Asking the child to understand, she goes off for a while with a man, after getting the girl to promise not to tell her parents. The aunt's defection stretches our belief a bit, but if we are generous, we understand that there couldn't have been any film without it.

There is never any question of danger for the girl: there is just the absence of plan and the occasional previously suppressed indulgence. (When she walks into town to shop, she buys a lipstick.) She hangs out for a while with two girls of about thirteen at a neighbor's house—two girls who are just over the border of puberty, which the girl herself is not. The older ones are obsessed with sex; the girl seems to know what they are talking about but doesn't care. The older ones manage to get a farm boy of the girl's age to join them and proceed to strip him, much to his and the girl's dismay. She and the boy later have a tussle and she accidentally injures him, which is perhaps an aftershock of the stripping.

At home she opens cans and eats. She even monkeys a bit with liquor but doesn't get drunk. She is personally untidy and unkempt. What is especially notable throughout, in practically all these adventures, is her composure. Some of the things that happen are new; all of them are being experienced alone for the first time. Yet she has the calm so often seen in children during fascination by the new. They often manage to maintain an assumed aplomb while they are plunging ahead into the unknown.

Possibly the most disturbing moment for her comes one day in the locker room at the swimming class. Her teacher, a heavy woman in her fifties, sees the girl staring at her nude body almost with petrifaction. The teacher chuckles and promises the same future to the girl.

Then something incredible happens—the film's second reliance on our cooperation. A huge multicolored balloon complete with passenger basket makes an emergency landing near the girl's house, and out crawls a handsome young balloonist. She invites him into the house, gives him lemonade, and lets him comb her long hair—getting the burrs out. Then he takes her for a balloon ride. We are so wonderstruck by this whole preposterous balloon episode that we hardly have the energy to disbelieve it. Can it be fantasy? It is couched in the same texture as all the rest of the picture. It is much easier to believe that it really happens, as incredible things do.

THE GIRL
Olive Films

HEARTBREAKER
IFC Films

The parents return—the aunt returns just before them—and the girl goes on with her swimming lessons. Then, at the pool, comes the one incident that shows the effect that her time alone has had on her. Otherwise we just spend a hundred minutes with this serious, intelligent child who is testing a new way of living. Strangely, all during this film without much conventional drama, we can't wait to see what will happen next.

The people who made *Heartbreaker* ran into trouble early. The writers of this French comedy came up with a good basic gimmick—what the trade calls a "high concept." But setting up that concept would take only a relatively few early minutes of screen time; they then had to figure out ways to use the gimmick, to sustain and vary it for all the rest of the picture's ninety minutes. The writers—Laurent Zeitoun, Jeremy Doner, and Yohan Gromb—met the

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challenge pretty cleverly, and the director Pascal Chaumeil kept his touch as light as possible. We go along with the gag. (Wry confirmation of success: we are told that *Heartbreaker* has already been bought for an American remake.)

"High concept" comedies are usually of two kinds. First, the Audrey Hepburn–Gregory Peck *Roman Holiday* kind, in which the story is the lifelike development of possibilities that exist in the basic gimmick. Second, the Buster Keaton *Seven Chances* kind, in which the gimmick arbitrarily imposes comic conditions on life. *Heartbreaker* is the second kind. A thirtyish man named Alex has worked out a scam. For a fee, and aided by a team including his sister, he will break up engagements. He is generally hired by a girl's parents to woo her away from her intended. But—all professions like to have ethics—he won't take on a job if the affianced couple are truly happy, and he won't sleep with the girl.

This scam, synopsized, may not seem tenable, but as it is revealed to us in the film's first sequence, it is so amusing that we just want it to go on. The story bubbles along until the inevitable happens: the scammer is himself involved, the biter is bit. What helps tremendously is the taking performance of Romain Duris as Alex. He is a skilled chameleon, and, even more helpful, he is attractive but certainly not handsome. This helps to keep the scheme sufficiently lifelike. The rest of the cast spin their roles perfectly, with Héléna Noguerra inevitably prominent as a steamy nympho.

Virtually every film-making country makes pictures of this high-concept kind, sometimes well, but France obviously wants the championship. *Heartbreaker* helps.

Postscript. For years I thought that the eminent Italian screenwriter Suso Cecchi D'Amico was a man, because of her first name. Then I met her son (a professor of English at the University of Rome) who explained that Suso is a dialect nickname for Susanna. This only increased my admiration for her. That she had built her exceptional career in a gender-biased world made it even more remarkable. The film historian Gian Piero Brunetta says that she was the only significant Italian woman screenwriter of the postwar period. To the outside world—though presumably she must have encountered some gender antipathies—she seemed to be moving from film to film simply because of her talent.

D'Amico, who died in Rome on July 31 at age ninety-six, began screenwriting in 1945—the last of her 118 pictures was in 2006. The first notable film on which she collaborated was nothing less than *The Bicycle Thief*, with no less a director than Vittorio De Sica. But gravity was not her only mode: comedy frequently fizzed up along the way. Some of the comedies were *Miracle in Milan*, also with De Sica; *Too Bad She's Bad*, which launched Sophia Loren; *The Taming of the Shrew*, in English with Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor. It is hard to name a prominent postwar Italian director with whom she did not work. (Fellini, perhaps, but she may have written for him uncredited. She certainly knew him.) Among the celebrated with whom she did work were Michelangelo Antonioni (*Le Amiche*), Francesco Rosi (*Salvatore Giuliano*), and—her longest-lasting association—Luchino Visconti, who wanted her for almost all his films, including *The Stranger*, *Rocco and His Brothers*, *Senso*, and *The Leopard*.

She liked collaborating. She said more than once that her idea of film-making, especially in Italy's golden age, was getting together with a few friends who were excited about the same idea. Yet the mere titles of many of her films—their generally high level—bespeak a writer who was especially wanted for qualities of aspiration. I remember wanting to read comment on D'Amico only a few years after she began, and not finding any.

She is a classic instance of the right person in the right place at the right time. From a cultivated family (her father was a distinguished literary critic), gifted, and curious about this art to which intellectuals had not been much drawn in her country, she responded to the splendid postwar wave and helped to keep it cresting. I used to wish that we had some individual work of hers. Then I learned a rueful fact. When I met her son, we happened to talk about adaptations of novels, and I told him that I thought Harold Pinter's screenplay of Proust, unproduced but published, was the best film treatment of a great novel. D'Amico said, "Ah, but you haven't read my mother's version of it." Unproduced *and* unpublished. I will obviously never know it. But the mere fact that she had written it heightened her unique luster. ◆

David Hajdu on Music
MEMPHIS ON BROADWAY

Anyone in denial about the demise of the record business will find on Broadway these nights proof of death more conclusive than the disappearance of music stores from the malls or the elimination of DJs from radio stations. Two musicals staged this year—*Memphis*, which won the Tony Award for Best Musical, and *Million Dollar Quartet*, which is set in the same city in the same period and deals with many of the same themes—verify the extinction of the old-school music industry by showing it to exist now solely as sentimental myth. Having always been a middlebrow outlet of attraction for middle-class tourism, Broadway excels at packaging nostalgia as popular art. Like the vendors set up under their marquees, Broadway theaters are in the souvenir business, and the hollow plastic objects presented as rock musicals at the Shubert and Nederlander theaters are mementos of a pop culture past that never really was.

MEMPHIS
Shubert Theatre

MILLION DOLLAR QUARTET
Nederlander Theatre

Both *Memphis* and *Million Dollar Quartet* are set in a time a bit more than fifty years ago—that is, a bit more than fifty years after the year 1900. They take place at the equinox of a hundred-plus-year period that most of us today tend to conceive as comprising the whole history of popular entertainment. (According to *Playbill*, the time of *Memphis* is "The '50s," and *Million Dollar Quartet* is loosely based on an actual event that took place on December 4, 1956.) Both shows deal with the early days of rock and roll. *Memphis* involves a fictional disc jockey inspired by Dewey Phillips, a real-life white boy who spun black music for teenagers of both races; and *Million Dollar Quartet* centers on the record producer Sam Phillips, another white Memphis music-business professional with a shrewd interest in black culture, who launched the careers of the show's titular quartet of Elvis Presley, Carl Perkins, Jerry Lee Lewis, and Johnny Cash. (The two men named Phillips were not related, though they were friends and,

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briefly, business partners.) The world of these people is as distant from contemporary experience as vaudeville and silent movies were from life in the mid-1950s. Indeed, the parallel stories of *Memphis* and *Million Dollar Quartet* have about as much cultural resonance today as *The Vamp*, a show about a silent star played by Carol Channing, and *Ankles Aweigh*, a throwback to the burlesque era, had bearing on their day when they opened on Broadway in 1955.

To aging baby boomers, whose availability of time and cash make them ideal Broadway customers, the focus of these shows on the birth of the modern musical age has a flattering allure. It reinforces a solipsism that hardly needs the boost, advancing yet again the boomers' fantasy that the world was born with them. I say this with no special pride in being over fifty myself. I don't mind the age, at least not most of the time; but I feel embarrassed sometimes to be part of a generation whose vainglory is such that we fill theaters every night to see shows aggrandizing the circumstances of our enthusiasms—even worthy enthusiasms like rock and roll—in the heroic terms of myth. Elvis may have been "the king," but he was not God, and it is the arrogance of my own age to think that everything of value and meaning arose with his kingdom just because we came along at the same time.

Memphis serves as the setting of both shows because of its critical function in rock history as the provenance of both Dewey Phillips's show on WHBQ radio and Sam Phillips's label, Sun Records, which recorded the pivotal white rockers as well as their black predecessors Muddy Waters and Howlin' Wolf, among others. For the prologue to *Last Train to Memphis*, the first book in his fine two-volume biography of Elvis, Peter Guralnick chose to describe the day in 1950 when Sam Phillips first met Dewey Phillips. In Guralnick's elegant and affectionate account, Sam "wanted so badly to meet" Dewey to share their common passion for African American music and culture. Sam Phillips explained to Guralnick that it was "genuine, untutored Negro" music he loved, and the musicians he sought were "Negroes with field mud on their boots and patches in their overalls [and] battered instruments and unfettered techniques." As Guralnick points out, "The music that he was attempting to record was the very music that Dewey Phillips was playing on the air."

Needless to say, neither of the Phillips men was looking for a singer like Paul Robeson, who was educated at Rutgers and Columbia; or a musician like Louis Armstrong, who had rather fettered technique and who played fastidiously cared-for trumpets; or a composer like Duke Ellington, who would not have gone out in public with a patch on his socks. Sam Phillips, like Alan Lomax before him, performed an invaluable service to posterity by documenting the art of African Americans, as well as that of their white peers and imitators, who were working in a vernacular milieu widely seen by most whites as disreputable—Phillips doing so for small fees to the artists, Lomax under contract to the Library of Congress. Muddy Waters knocked on Phillips's door and Phillips let him in. Yet Waters, as the one doing the knocking, represented opportunity for Phillips as much as Phillips did for Waters. Moreover, the propositions that "untutored" music is more "genuine," and that filth or deficiency confer authenticity, have always been racism and classism passing for egalitarianism.

Million Dollar Quartet is set in the Sun Records studio at 706 Union Avenue in Memphis, a storefront box considerably smaller and even blander than the set that simulates it on West 41st Street in New York, and the show takes as its inspiration the happenstance events of a Tuesday afternoon long enshrined in rock legend. Elvis Presley, who had already left Sun for RCA and was the hottest thing in the free world, was driving around Memphis with one of his girlfriends, a Vegas showgirl named Marilyn Evans. He noticed cars parked in front of the studio, and the two of them dropped in. Carl Perkins was wrapping up a recording session with his brothers Jay and Clayton on guitar and bass, "Fluke" Holland on drums, and a then-unknown session pianist, Jerry Lee Lewis. For the next couple of hours, Elvis and the boys jammed, just for the kick of making music together—or trying to. Sam Phillips, ever attuned to opportunity, kept the microphone on and the tape rolling.

At one point—how much of the session had progressed has never been clear—Johnny Cash, who was the biggest name on Sun Records at the time, though hardly a rock and roller, came by. Cash, in his memoirs, claimed to have gotten to the studio first. Other accounts have him arriving late in the proceedings, with his wife, to pick up money for Christmas presents. A few additional people, including Charles Underwood, a songwriter working for Phillips, and Cliff Greaves, a minor rockabilly singer, may or may not have played or sung. The uncertain facts, the conflicting stories, and the spottiness of the surviving evidence on tape all contribute to the mystique of the recordings as sacred text.

Several editions of the sessions have been released in various formats over the years, including a "complete" version with forty-seven tracks, currently available on CD and iTunes. The music is wonderful for not being monumental. It is ragged, casual, joyous, endearingly imperfect, and not for a moment phony or inflated. Elvis dominates, singing lead on all but a few songs and calling the tunes—many of them gospel numbers he no doubt assumed all the fellows had learned in church, such as "Jesus Walked That Lonesome Valley" and "Just a Little Talk with Jesus." They goof around with "Jingle Bells" and "White Christmas" and try three or four times to pull together Chuck Berry's "Brown-Eyed Handsome Man." Elvis and Carl Perkins practically fight over who holds Berry in deeper awe. I think no recordings of Elvis, not even the canonical original Sun Sessions, capture him so free and true—unfettered in the best way, in joy, rather than in the way of his final years, in druggy indifference. (I have never been able to hear Johnny Cash on these recordings, though the fault may be my own. Cash always insisted he had been singing with the group, but at a distance from the mike and in a higher pitch than usual for him, to accommodate Presley's keys, and I will not call a dead man a liar.)

The goings-on that Tuesday in Memphis probably have the makings of an eye-opening evening in the theater, but after *Million Dollar Quartet* we may never know. The show uses the fact that Presley, Perkins, Lewis, and Cash were all in same room one day to justify the staging of what amounts to an open studio concert of the four singers' greatest hits (Perkins's "Blue Suede Shoes" and "Matchbox," Presley's "That's All Right" and "Hound Dog," Lewis's "Great Balls of Fire" and "Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' on," Cash's "Folsom Prison Blues" and "I Walk the Line," none of which any of them did on December 4, 1956). All the music in the show is sung and played on stage, not lip-synched—a fact that an announcer emphasizes before the opening curtain—and it is delivered with polished fervor by four skillful performers who wisely leave enough of themselves in the work to avoid outright impersonation. They prevent their creamy-smooth, milky-white act from hardening into cheese. Still, the whole thing is not much more than a Vegas-

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style tribute show best suited to the city of Elvis's undoing.

A narrative of sorts, threaded between the songs, has to do with Sam Phillips's devotion to recording the music that he loved. "This is where the soul of a man never dies," the Phillips character says in a line that came from the real Phillips and suggests, in its use of "soul" to evoke both the human spirit and blackness, the tension in Phillips's way of paying tribute to African American music by having white people record it. Near the end of the show, the playwrights Floyd Mutrux and Colin Escott (the latter has written a couple of good books on American vernacular music) have Presley and the boys join in a toast to Phillips: "Here's to the father of rock and roll!" Even after an hour of watching the glorification of Phillips for his having recorded a quartet of four great white voices of the early rock era, the line struck me as dubious, as if fatherhood were a matter not of who planted the seeds—in the case of rock, that would be black R&B artists such as Roy Brown, Wynonie Harris, Johnny Otis, Ike Turner, and many others—but of who took the baby pictures.

Foremost among those whom Sam Phillips admired was the person who did pretty much the same thing he did, but on the radio: Dewey Phillips. As Guralnick quotes Sam saying of Dewey, "He was a genius, and I don't call many people geniuses." Three blocks north of *Million Dollar Quartet* in Times Square, *Memphis* uses Dewey Phillips as the starting point for an original musical about the rise of rock in postwar Memphis. Dewey, with nominal tweaking, has become Huey, who, like his inspiration, is a hyperactive, undereducated former department-store record clerk who carries his love for black music over the airwaves, winning both the ire of the white establishment and the hearts of its teenage offspring. Further *amours* enter the show with the introduction of a sexy female singer who neatly stands in for the earthy, carnal dangers that black music represents to the narrow-minded whites of America in the '50s and to the show's equally unenlightened creators.

Memphis was written by Joe DiPietro—a librettist best known for his work with composer Jimmy Roberts on the poppish Off-Broadway musical comedy *I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change*—and David Bryan, the longtime keyboard player for Bon Jovi. Musically, the show is proficient, often pleasant, and occasionally fun, but for the most part it is numbingly derivative. Every song, and I mean *every* song, sounds vaguely and sometimes not-so-vaguely like something else. The big ballad, "Love Will Stand When All Else Falls," is essentially a reworking of "You Light Up My Life." "Colored Woman" sounds like an outtake from a mid-'70s John Lennon album. Half a dozen of the tunes feel like B-sides of Blood, Sweat & Tears singles, and most of the rest remind me of the things that sitcom soundtrack composers used to throw together when the script called for a song to be played on a radio in the show. They seem almost but never enough like actual songs.

It would be unfair to fault this music for sounding wholly unlike the R&B and early rock and roll that DJs such as Dewey Phillips and Alan Freed, Phillips's more celebrated counterpart in Cleveland, played on the radio. The songs of *Oklahoma!* don't sound like Dust Bowl ballads, and *Memphis* is supposed to be an original musical. Its failing is its lack of originality. Dewey Phillips, with his ear for idiosyncrasy, would probably not have played these songs.

Like *Million Dollar Quartet*, *Memphis* offers a discomfitingly archaic kind of hero: a white man blessed not only with special access to the mysteries of the black world, but also with the power to share the magic of black art with the white masses. For both Huey/Dewey and Sam Phillips, it is white privilege that makes them heroes. Today the particular mechanisms of their privilege—records and radio—seem almost archaic, too. In the contemporary era of social media and aggregated information, there can be no Hueys or Deweys or Sams, and *Million Dollar Quartet* and *Memphis* make that seem almost like good news. ◆

Jonathan Freedland
THE LIVING LIE

TRIALS OF THE DIASPORA: A HISTORY OF ANTI-SEMITISM IN ENGLAND
By Anthony Julius
(Oxford University Press, 811 pp., $45)

I.

Anthony Julius begins his magisterial and definitive history of a thousand years of anti-Semitism in England with an anecdote from his childhood. He is riding on a train to the English Midlands with his father, who is in conversation with "Arthur," a non-Jewish business associate. Arthur, keen to ingratiate himself with his companion, remarks that his daughter recently had a little Jewish girl over to their house for tea. "I must say," Arthur adds, beaming, "the child has got the most beautiful manners."

Julius recalls that, even at the age of ten or eleven, he had a "sense of the temperature in the compartment rising." His father says nothing, refusing to confront Arthur over his remark. It is clear that fear plays no part in this decision. Julius *père* does not lack courage. "It had instead something to do with an unwillingness to condescend to being offended, a refusal to acknowledge the hurt caused by the insult implicit in Arthur's remarks—that it is always noteworthy when Jews behave well."

It may seem an odd starting point for a book that is, for the bulk of its eight-hundred-odd pages (including two hundred pages of footnotes), rigorously scholarly rather than personal. But it is fitting. Everything about that early encounter is English: the cramped train compartment, the embarrassment, the stuffiness, what is unsaid signifying more than what is said. And the subject at hand—English anti-Semitism—often operates in the nebulous, subtle, implicit register typified by Arthur's remark. Indeed, Julius devotes an entire chapter to the "mentality of modern English anti-Semitism," to the slippery, subcutaneous prejudices and assumptions, the slights and the snubs, that have informed centuries of English social life.

But the memory of that train journey with "Arthur"—a name that centuries ago stood as the very acme of Englishness—lingers over the entire book for a less direct reason. The clue lies in the prose of Anthony Julius, a London-based polymath who made his name twice over—as the literary critic who deconstructed the anti-Semitism of T. S. Eliot, and then, to a much wider public, as the lawyer who represented Princess Diana

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in her divorce from the heir to the English throne. That prose is cool and precise, never anything but fully in control of the extraordinary breadth of material under review—from medieval church history to the rantings of the early twenty-first-century blogosphere, with Chaucer, Donne, both Eliots, and many other figures along the way. The episode on the train almost has one wondering if this is an author determined to prove that a Jew can write on English history as soberly and thoroughly as any Englishman—with, as it were, the most beautiful manners. But the coolness of Julius's prose suggests something more, too: a man, like his father, unwilling "to condescend to being offended."

Accordingly, Julius digs up and holds to the light a litany of murderous crimes committed against the Jews and then, in later centuries, one vicious quotation after another, discussing the evidence he has exhumed in a tone of bemused detachment rather than righteous fury. He serves up, for example, a choice passage from J. B. Priestley, one rich in the hoariest stereotypes, before merely and drily noting that "Priestley's concessions to everyday anti-Semitic sentiment might surprise contemporary readers." Perhaps that is the voice that a fine legal training inculcates. But one suspects it is also the voice of a man who learned long ago to be anything but the angry Jew.

The result is a meticulous taxonomy of prejudice, written as if with a pair of surgical gloves, the better to handle a particularly revolting set of specimens. "All versions of anti-Semitism libel Jews. These libels may be grouped under three headings: the blood libel … the conspiracy libel … the economic libel." A series of distinctions between categories, so fine they might border on the legalistic, follows. The chapter on the mentality of modern anti-Semitism describes four types of English anti-Semitic intellectual: A, B, C, and D. Category B further subdivides into categories B1 and B2.

Not that Julius fails to supply many an arresting, plain-spoken sentence. Several passages of argument culminate in a line memorable and true—indeed, memorable because true. Thus he denies anti-Semitism the status of an ideology, maintaining that it merely allows lumpen-thinkers to barge into intellectual debates that are beyond them: "Anti-Semitism has a place in the history of ideas only in the sense that a burglar has a place in a house." In a similar vein, Julius offers this on "the new anti-Zionism": "It inhabits those grooves along which received thought—and *non*-thought—moves. It is, so to speak, the spontaneous philosophy of … those who do not philosophize, and the spontaneous history of many of those who know no history." He is particularly scathing about the more extreme Jewish critic of Zionism, upending one of the more clichéd insults often hurled in their direction: "The Jewish anti-Zionist scourge is not a self-hater; he is enfolded in self-admiration. He is in step with the best opinion."

II.

For all the Englishness of its style, Julius is adamant that his is not a parochial study, a book of interest only to the English. (It is not a history of *British* anti-Semitism: Scottish and Welsh Jew-haters will have to wait for their place in the annals.) He insists that England is key to the history of anti-Semitism itself—that England was both a pioneer and an innovator in the business of anti-Jewish loathing. England's ejection of the Jews in 1290 was "the first national, enduring expulsion of an entire Jewish population in history." When the twelfth-century death of the boy who was later known as Saint William of Norwich was blamed on local Jews, it became the first recorded instance of the blood libel anywhere, the first documented occasion on which the Jews faced the defamatory accusation that they ritually murdered gentiles, usually for the sake of extracting and using their blood, usually for sacramental purposes.

Thanks to Chaucer's "Prioress's Tale"—itself a blood libel story—and *The Merchant of Venice* and *Oliver Twist*, England can also claim, in Julius's account, to have bequeathed literary anti-Semitism to the world. In the seventeenth century, William Prynne, a "Puritan polemicist of unusual passion and thoroughness," authored the first extended essay in anti-Semitic invective, the first largely secular anti-Jewish tract, as opposed to a Christian attack on Judaism. And the English innovatory habit has persisted into our own time, Julius adds: when it comes to anti-Zionism with an anti-Semitic hue, "England [again] arrived first." (But Julius is no jingoistic Little Englander. He concedes that "race-conspiracy anti-Semitism" originated on the Continent and came to England as a European import. He does not claim credit for his country where credit is not due.)

Perhaps the most striking aspect of this history is its longevity. The Cambridge-educated Robert S. Wistrich conferred on anti-Semitism the honor of being "the longest hatred," and England makes good on that claim. This is an enmity that has brewed for ten centuries, sometimes manifesting in bloody pogroms—as at York in 1190—and sometimes in mere lip-curling disdain, as when Julius himself was described in a profile in the *Telegraph*, following the settlement of the Diana-Charles divorce in 1996, in this way: "He is a Jewish intellectual and Labour supporter, and less likely to feel restrained by considerations of fair play. 'I'd be very worried if I were the Royal Family,' says a Cambridge don who taught him. 'He'll get lots of money out of them.'" (The newspaper later ran an apology for the item.)

Constantly evolving, adapting to the times, anti-Semitism appears to be one of England's most resilient cultural and social constants. Stick an arbitrary pin at any point in a timeline of English history and hatred of the Jews will be there. If the middle of the eighteenth century takes your fancy, you will find the "Jew Bill," the Jewish Naturalization Act of 1753, designed to allow foreign-born Jews the same right accorded to non-Jewish aliens, namely the right to buy their own naturalization as British subjects. This sparked fierce resistance. Julius records that "at political dinners, anti-Jew-Bill hostesses served pork and ham and other 'anti-Judaic food'; women took to wearing crosses or ribbons with inscriptions, advertising their opposition to the bill." The clergy sided with the merchant class to oppose the legislation, which passed only to be repealed under the pressure of public opinion in the very same year.

Almost no one is exempt in this account. Julius has evidence to damn nearly every public figure or faction from every epoch. We shall return to Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Dickens; but Julius's charge sheet applies also to Thomas Carlyle, William Cobbett, W. E. Gladstone, Bertrand Russell, Queen Victoria, Ernest Bevin, and George Orwell, to name just a few. Take any one of those names, as if at random: "In the work of William Cobbett," still esteemed as a great radical in Britain, "Jew-hatred is everywhere," Julius writes. Cobbett described Jews as a people "living in all the filthiness of usury and increase," and as "extortioners by habit and almost instinct." In Parliament, Cobbett challenged a fellow member to "produce a Jew who ever dug, or who ever made his own coat or his own shoes, or who did anything at all, except get all the money he could from the pockets of the people." In *Rural Rides*, in 1830, the Jews, Julius reports, have "hook-noses and round eyes," the Jewesses are characterized by their "long and sooty necks."

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And yet Cobbett is taught in British schools—or was taught in mine—as an admirable figure, a pamphleteer and a reformer who championed the poor. His anti-Semitism, so vigorous and ubiquitous, was simply invisible.

Many of Julius's examples emanate from what we would now regard as the political right. The attacks on Benjamin Disraeli are jaw-dropping. Though baptized as an Anglican in what should have been his bar mitzvah year, the man who became a Conservative prime minister in 1868 was never seen as anything but a Jew:

> In the manner of anti-Semitic discourse, the abuse was both inventive and stale. Disraeli was a "lump of dirt," a "Fagin." He was "Judas," "Jewish Dizzy," the "Jewish Chief," "Sir Benjamin de Judah," and "Chief Rabbi Benjamin." He was "a very Hebrew of Hebrews," the "Jew Earl, Philo-Turkish Jew and Jew Premier" and the "traitorous Jew," the "haughty Jew," and the "abominable Jew." He was a leader of the "Turkophile party," its "most rabid element" consisting of "the race of Shylock." He was the premier of a "Jew government." He was a wizard, a conjurer, a magician, an alchemist. He was a "man of the East," an "Asiatic." "For the past six years we have had an Asiatic ruler." He was a "wandering Jew," "sprung from a race of migratory Jews." He was "born in a foreign country [i.e. England]," and raised "amid a people for whose ideas and habits he has no sympathy and little respect." He was a "sham Christian and a sham Englishman." . . . Most cartoons gave him an immense nose and curly black hair; he was represented as Shylock ("our modern Shylock"); many related him to the Devil ("the most authentic incarnation of the Evil One"); two represented him in the act of ritually murdering the infant Britannia, and in one of these Gladstone is the distressed mother, arriving perhaps too late to save her child. And there was a note sounded for the first time, but to be repeated many times thereafter: the Jews want war, against the national interest.

There are several things to note here. First, the historic irony that among the accusations leveled at Disraeli was that, as a Jew, he would naturally sympathize with the Muslim Turks against the Christian minority in the crumbling Ottoman Empire: few critics of the Jews today assume a natural affinity between them and the world's Muslims. Second, the litany of abuse that came Disraeli's way liberally picked from the storehouse of hostile imagery and associations that had accrued over the centuries about Jews. "It was as if all the anti-Semitic discourse in general circulation in the culture was drawn in that time towards this one man," Julius writes. This is one of his book's strongest themes: anti-Semitic iconography never dies, it just fades away—only to be picked up again, sometimes many years later.

And third, while much of the anti-Disraeli hostility came from his own side—High Tories who regarded their leader as an arriviste usurper—it was reinforced from the left. The socialist William Morris, like Cobbett still revered, condemned Disraeli as the "clever trickster." In the 1930s, the Labour politician Hugh Dalton could call his party colleague Harold Laski "an undersized Semite" (while British officials referred to him as a "snivelling Hebrew"). As Julius's later chapters on radical anti-Zionism demonstrate, "the Jews want war" is a trope that has made its home on the left.

III.

Julius wades through all this muck doggedly. He says that writing the book was "like swimming long-distance through a sewer." The historical chapters can feel relentless, a plod through centuries of ugliness and stupidity. Relief comes from the unexpected nugget. Not many general readers will have known that, in the middle of the war, the Nazis took the time to enact a law that banned Jews from using their professional titles when dealing with German officials. Or that Pope Pius X engaged with Theodor Herzl directly to reject Zionism on theological grounds: "The Jews have not recognized our Lord, therefore we cannot recognize the Jewish people, and its aspiration to a national existence."

Further leavening of what might otherwise be an indigestible digest of England's anti-Semitic past and present comes from regular flashes of keen insight. The man who is convinced of Jewish omnipotence and culpability for everything wrong in the world cannot be deterred, Julius rightly notes, by mere empirical evidence. "The repeated Jewish failure to protect Jewish life in modern times (say, from the collapse of efforts on behalf of Romanian Jewry in the late 1870s, to the feebleness of efforts on behalf of European Jewry in World War II), let alone any less fundamental interests, does not faze such a person. He is convinced that 'Jewish power' is ruthless, self-seeking, and indomitable." The logic here is simple

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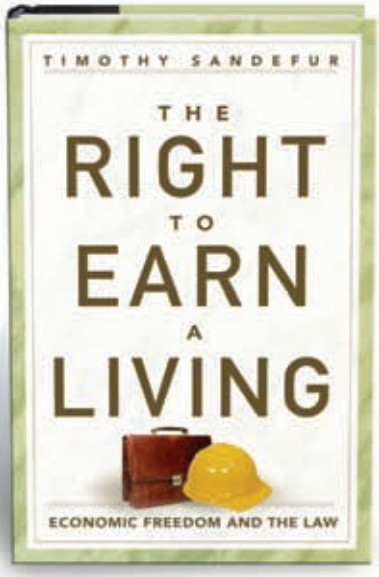

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but potent, analogous to the atheist's case against God: if the Jews are all-powerful, how come they suffer so much?

Julius dismisses with similar dispatch the regular cry of the anti-Semite that he only wishes to exclude or otherwise to discriminate against the Jews to save them from the inevitable surge in anti-Semitism that would result were they to be admitted or allowed to live on an equal footing. He cites the postwar British immigration policy that recruited Eastern Europeans from displaced persons camps, including many who had fought alongside the Nazis and committed war crimes—but actively excluded Jews. "The reason given was fear of stimulating anti-Semitism," Julius acidly remarks. "The assumption that the very presence of Jews causes Jew-hatred is itself anti-Semitic—it amounts to nothing other than the proposition, 'to know the Jews is to hate them.'"

Such wisdom makes the wade through the sewer bearable. But it is when Julius is able to break free from the chronological that his book really takes flight. The chapter on English literary anti-Semitism is a tour de force that stands up well as an essay in its own right. Here Julius makes several powerful arguments. He contends that the Jew-hatred of letters flourishes even when—or perhaps particularly when—the Jew-hatred of action is on the wane. Pogroms and anti-Semitic political parties are thin on the ground in England precisely when anti-Semitic poems, plays, and novels are in abundance. "It is an error," he writes, "to suppose that a culture that energetically persecutes fictional Jews will always be ready to persecute real Jews too." In England's case, this process is helped along by the literal—as opposed to the literary—absence of Jews, in the period between the expulsion of 1290 and their readmission under Cromwell in 1656. Chaucer tells his "Prioress's Tale," and Shakespeare creates his Shylock, when there are no Jews around to challenge fiction with reality. In those centuries England served as an object lesson in the possibility, proved again in our own time in Japan or Malaysia, of anti-Semitism without Jews.

It is in the literary sphere, Julius maintains, that England has played an exceptional role in the development of anti-Semitism. He argues that most anti-Semitic writing is execrable, but the few works of quality which exist—and which therefore "challenge the self-respect of Jewish readers and spectators"—are to be found in the English canon. And canon is exactly the right word, since the key offenders here are Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Dickens.

The "Prioress's Tale," *The Merchant of Venice*, and *Oliver Twist* are all re-tellings of the core blood libel myth, with its central motif of a Christian innocent falling victim to a bloodthirsty Jew. In the Chaucer story, just two hundred lines long, there is next to nothing but the kidnapping and the murder of a Christian child. The later narratives are richer and more complex, but the heart of the story is the same: Shylock demands his pound of Christian flesh; Fagin preys upon the young, blameless Oliver. Julius makes a convincing case that, partly because of the enduring power of these three works, the blood libel is the master trope of anti-Semitism, especially but not only in its English form.

The evidence comes by following the blood libel's trail through centuries of English literature, all the way into the present. Du Maurier's Svengali is a Jewish sorcerer preying on a pure Christian girl. Trollope's apparently Jewish Melmotte in *The Way We Live Now* is said to be "fed with the blood of widows and children." In *The Prime Minister*, the Jew Lopez is a "swarthy son of Judah," "Jew-boy," "greasy Jew adventurer out of the gutter" with a "bright eye, a hook nose and a glib tongue," whose own (gentile) wife comes to see him as "thirsting for blood." Graham Greene based *Brighton Rock* on an actual razor attack *on* a Jewish bookmaker at a race course, re-writing it to become a razor attack *by* a Jewish gang on the Roman Catholic Pinkie.

"The blood libel," Julius concludes, "is the largely unnoticed, master theme of this discourse, its 'ur-story.'" And the arrival of this bloody trail in the present culminates in one of the book's most devastating passages, in which Julius marshals his skills as both a lawyer and a critic—mastering both the forensic and the aesthetic, as he might put it—to arraign Tom Paulin, the author of a poem called "Killed in Crossfire" that was published in the *Observer* in London at the height of the second intifada. The occasion of the poem was the death of the young Muhammad Al Dura, allegedly at the hands of Israeli soldiers at the Netzarim Junction in Gaza:

> We're fed this inert
> this lying phrase
> like comfort food
> as another little Palestinian boy
> in trainers and a white teeshirt
> is gunned down by the Zionist SS
> whose initials we should
> —but we don't—dumb goys—
> clock in the weasel word *crossfire.*

Julius deconstructs each line painstakingly, demonstrating it to be a text dripping in anti-Jewish language and imagery. Consider the phrase "dumb goys." It is already clear from "Zionist SS" that Paulin's target is not the IDF alone, for all Zionists are implicated. But "goys" widens the target still further, declaring that it is Jews in general that Paulin has in his sights. "Goys"—not the proper Hebrew plural *goyim*—is a word used "by diaspora Jews, as reported by anti-Semites." Moreover, "it reprises the anti-Semitic trope that Jews privately view gentiles with contempt. The disparagement of '*goyim*' is a central trope in the *Protocols* [*of the Elders of Zion*]: The *goyim* are a flock of sheep and we are their wolves."

Above all, Julius shows, "Killed in Crossfire" pays copious allusory homage to the blood libel. Chaucer's Prioress also referred to the Jews' victim as "little," as did the tale of "Little Sir Hugh" of Lincoln. Once again perfidious Jews are bent on killing gentile children: note the "another" in the fourth line. Not to mention the clumsy equation of Jews and Nazis, itself now a routine trope. By the time Julius is done, Paulin's squib of a poem reeks of the author's verdict on it: "The most vulgar anti-Semitism speaks in 'Crossfire.'"

But if Julius can drill deep, he can also range wide. The shocking feature of the chapter on literary anti-Semitism is that it echoes those on English history: everyone who is anyone is in it. We knew about T. S. Eliot and Pound—the latter, ahead of Paulin, wrote in *The Pisan Cantos* that "the goyim are cattle"—along with, say, Evelyn Waugh. But Julius reveals that the writer, major or minor, untainted by Jew-hatred was the exception, the one infected by anti-Semitism the norm.

So H. G. Wells, though ready to exonerate and to defend the Jews in some places, elsewhere blames them and their separatist habit for their history of persecution: Judaism is an "aggressive and vindictive conspiracy." During a Bloomsbury gathering, a question is asked of everyone present, and Virginia Woolf points to her husband, Leonard, and says loudly: "Let the Jew answer." In *The Thirty-Nine Steps*, a book still considered suitable for a school reading list during my own boyhood in England in the late 1970s, John Buchan's hero is warned against the "Jew-anarchists" and "capitalists who rake in

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the shekels." In charge of this global conspiracy is "a little white-faced Jew in a bath-chair with an eye like a rattlesnake." This is "the man who is ruling the world just now." Even the record of that secular saint, George Orwell, is not clean. Sure, he denounced conspiracy talk as Nazi-like, but he was not above describing Zionists as "a bunch of Wardour Street Jews who have a controlling influence over the British press."

After World War II, and as the facts of the Holocaust became known, such casual anti-Semitism became embarrassing to those who had been guilty of it. When Graham Greene was asked why the word "Jew" had been removed from later editions of *Brighton Rock* and *Stamboul Train*, he explained that "after the Holocaust one couldn't use the word Jew in the loose way one used it before the war . . . the casual references to Jews [are] a sign of those times when one regarded the word Jew as almost a synonym for capitalist." But a question remains: had Greene and those like him ceased to regard Jew as a synonym for a variety of real and imagined evils—or had they simply ceased to say so out loud? Did those attitudes persist, even if they were no longer the sort of thing one could say in public? And if they did persist, where exactly did they go?

IV.

An answer of sorts is to be found in the final section of *Trials of the Diaspora*, its most valiant and controversial part, when Julius addresses contemporary anti-Zionism. It is the arguments made in these chapters of Julius's book that dominated the British reviews of it, and certainly the handful that were hostile.

Even to include anti-Zionism in a study of anti-Semitism will look like a provocation to those who believe that the two are utterly distinct. There are discontinuities between modern anti-Zionism and ancient Jew-hatred, of course. Julius is quite aware that anti-Zionism "is adopted by people who profess deep hostility to anti-Semitism . . . self-identified Jews are among its advocates, and . . . it comes from the Left—indeed, has become part of the common sense among people of a broadly progressive temper." But the points of connection outnumber the points of departure. Julius is clear that what he calls the "new anti-Zionism" deploys against the Jews collectively—in the form of the Jewish state—many of the "principal stratagems and tropes" that traditional anti-Semitism directed at the Jews as individuals.

Julius knows the fury that such a claim will provoke in his anti-Zionist opponents, whose self-perceived distance from anti-Semitism is essential to their own self-image as anti-racists. He knows, too, how quick they will be to deploy the counter-charge, that Zionists always cry anti-Semitism when Israel is under attack. But he presses on regardless. He hints at, but does not dwell on, the case that opposition to a Jewish state may be necessarily anti-Semitic, in that it makes an exception of the Jews, denying to them alone the right it would grant to almost all other peoples, including the Palestinians, namely a self-governed home of their own. Julius argues that much anti-Israel rhetoric fails this test of exceptionalism. If the scandal is not in the amount of attention paid to Israel and Palestine—much more than to almost any of the "approximately forty armed conflicts being fought in approximately thirty countries at present"—then it is in the vehemence, the partisanship, the "one-eyed refusal to find fault with any party other than Israel."

Again, Julius does no more than hint at a necessary connection between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism. He is a careful thinker. He states that "it would be a mistake in analysis to regard confrontations with Zionism and Israel as taking place between Jews and anti-Semites alone." He allows that the Jews sometimes have "rational" enemies, those who "find themselves in conflict with a genuine Jewish project or stance"—and that the Palestinians might fall into precisely this category. "It is thus at least possible for anti-Zionists, and in particular Palestinian anti-Zionists, to be rational enemies of those Jews who constitute themselves as Israelis." The key word here is "possible." For while anti-Zionism might not logically entail anti-Semitism, Julius sets out to show that all too often the one shades into the other, even if only as a factual matter, a matter of contingency.

His method here is English—that is, empirical rather than theoretical. He shows in one case after another how the constant refrains of anti-Zionist discourse echo those of anti-Semitism's earlier incarnations. This exercise relies for its power on the previous 450 pages of evidence that Julius has laid before us. By the time he comes to his discussion of anti-Zionism, we may hear for ourselves the resonances between then and now.

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The blood libel is the most obvious example, an anti-Semitic constant that makes its reappearance in a piece of anti-Zionist agitprop such as Paulin's 'Crossfire' poem or Caryl Churchill's mini-play *Seven Jewish Children,* which, in Julius's view, depicts Jews as liars who are ready to murder gentile children thanks to a genocidal ambition rooted in Judaism itself: "Tell her I look at one of their children covered in blood and what do I feel?… Tell her I wouldn't care if we wiped them out.… Tell her I don't care if the world hates us, tell us we're better haters, tell her we're chosen people." When one reads that passage having read Julius's centuries-old examples of anti-Semites lighting upon the Jews' chosenness, one shudders.

He does similar work with the proposed academic boycott of Israeli scholars, a topic of repeated debate among Britain's various academic trade unions, exposing the ugly lineage of the boycott idea. Most people know—or so one hopes—that one of the Nazis' first moves was the boycott of Jewish shops and businesses. Julius goes back much further, recalling the role of the English Church in the thirteenth century, which also sought a boycott of Jews lest they contaminate good Christian souls. He even demonstrates a left-wing ancestry for the boycott tactic, noting that the French socialist Proudhon wanted to see Jews barred from all kinds of employment, their synagogues closed. "In the end it will be necessary," Proudhon wrote, to "send this race back to Asia or exterminate it." Julius wants today's boycott advocates to know the historical company that they are keeping. "Every call to boycott Jews or the Jewish state," he writes, "contains within it every previous such call. Anti-Semitism's discursive history makes this unavoidable.… A boycott call can never be innocent."

Few echoes are louder than the one emanated by the conspiracy trope. The set text remains *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, a czarist forgery that was meant to read like a Jewish how-to manual for world domination. But the notion of a global conspiracy appears frequently in anti-Zionist discourse, too. Julius offers up examples both coarse and sophisticated. In the former category are sermons delivered by radical Islamist preachers, some of whom made their homes in London. "The people who are ruling the world unfortunately happen to be the Jews, who are the henchmen of the *dajal* [anti-Christ]," declared one Abdullah Al Faisal, who was jailed in 2003 for soliciting murder. In the latter category belong statements from Jenny Tonge, a member of the House of Lords for the Liberal Democrats (the junior partner in Britain's current coalition government): "The pro-Israel lobby has got its grips on the Western world, its financial grips," she declared in 2006. Anti-Zionists who lapse into conspiracy talk need to be aware of that theme's provenance. A smiling Julius suggests that John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt were just so aware when they included in their essay on the "Israel Lobby"—which argued that a shadowy, malign force was in control of the world's sole superpower—"the anxious disclaimer" that their thesis should not be read as an endorsement of the *Protocols*.

But surely it is different now, the anti-Zionist will cry. For one thing, there are plenty of Jews in their camp: surely such fellowship exonerates them from the charge of anti-Semitism. Not so fast, says Julius, detailing the long and melancholy history of Jews who have stood with anti-Semites against their own people, a line that stretches all the way back to medieval times when Jewish apostates could be produced to testify to the falsity of the Talmud or the barbarity of Jewish practices. The secret-spilling renegade is still venerated today. Julius quotes the leftist polemicist Tariq Ali's lavish praise for an Israeli-born anti-Zionist who "had long abandoned Israeli patriotism, but he had been an insider and knew a great deal."

What of the related distinction that some anti-Zionists make between "good" Jews—those who oppose Israel—and "bad" Jews, those who stand with it? Nothing new here, either. More than a century ago, as anti-alien agitation in Britain was at its peak, anti-immigration advocates were keen to separate themselves from the anti-Dreyfus hotheads in France. An unqualified anti-Semitism became something to be ashamed of; so anti-Semites began to insist they were not against Jews as such, they were just against this particular kind. "In due course, this became a reflex," says Julius.

Wherever they turn, anti-Zionists will find history got there first. Some, like Caryl Churchill, might think that they have found something fresh in the observation that in Israel the onetime Jewish victim has become the Jewish perpetrator. Unfortunately for them, here is Julius with the text of a sermon preached by Herbert of Losinga, the bishop of Norwich, nearly a thousand years ago, and he, too ploughed the "persecuted Jews have become persecutors" furrow. Nor should those who claim they are exhibiting great courage—or risking "the wrath of Moses," in the words of one British newspaper columnist—by criticizing the Jewish state believe they are displaying any great originality. Joseph Banister, an anti-Semitic fanatic who described Jews as "scrofula-laden blood" at the turn of the twentieth century, also complained that unless one praised the Jews, one risked "the grave charge of anti-Semitism, which brings down on [one's] head the wrath of almost every daily journal in London."

The cumulative effect of all this should be to give today's anti-Zionists pause. They have a moral and intellectual obligation to check every conceptual and rhetorical path they are about to take and ask themselves who might have been here before. For the very scrupulous, it may mean a re-thinking of their entire approach, a decision to make their case only in a language uninfected by centuries of Jew-hatred and its tropes. That will not be easy. Julius suggests anti-Zionism has become as entangled with anti-Semitism as anti-communism once was: "It is as difficult for today's anti-Zionist to evade anti-Semitism as it was for the anti-Bolshevist of ninety years ago." But the work is surely necessary. Otherwise today's opponents of Israel risk hurling at contemporary Jews the accusations that anti-Semites once threw at earlier Jewish generations, that they are "bloodthirsty child-killers, global conspirators and the enemies of humanity." That's a description that no act of Israeli policy, no matter how misguided or brutal some have been, can justify.

Yet the burden is not all on one side. There is a gap in Julius's argument, one that reveals the work that has to be done by defenders of Israel. Just as many anti-Zionists need to reformulate the objections they make about Israel, shedding all and any anti-Semitic resonances, so many Jews need to find a way to hear rational and normal political objections to Israeli conduct without drowning them out in loud echoes of the Jewish past. Such a process would start with the acknowledgment that there is an essential difference between the current era and the two millennia that preceded it: namely, the shift from Jewish powerlessness to Jewish power, in the form of the state of Israel. That is a massive and qualitative change, rendering some echoes and analogies deceptive. Claims that were made about medieval Jews, living as a despised and tiny minority in England, cannot straightforwardly be weighed alongside claims about Jews living as a sovereign majority in their own state. They are not the same.

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Julius cites a speech by Karl Lueger, the anti-Semitic mayor of Vienna at the close of the nineteenth century, to show how the substitution of a few key words moves it close to the typical discourse of the new anti-Zionism. "We object to Christians being oppressed," in Lueger's text, becomes "we object to Palestinians being oppressed" in Julius's hypothetical modern-day version. But there is a huge difference here. Lueger's claim was absurd. Austria's Jewish minority were not oppressing the Christians; if anything it was, and would prove to be, the other way around, not least owing to Lueger's own efforts. But that is not the situation in Israel today. For forty-three years Israel has been the military ruler of the Palestinians in the West Bank; and as Julius himself concedes in a damning passage on the occupation, Israeli rule has often been oppressive. The similarity of language between an anti-Semitic statement in 1900 and an anti-Zionist one today is important, but does not always settle the matter: what was illegitimate then might, in some very specific cases, have a different meaning now.

In other words, the terrible history of defamation against the Jews must not be a block to criticism of Israel acting as a normal state judged by normal standards. Otherwise one is telling journalists that they cannot report on the deaths of children caused by the Israel Defense Forces because they risk an echo of the blood libel, or that commentators cannot accuse AIPAC of flexing its muscle in a bullying fashion because of the resonance with conspiracy talk. (Which is not to say that resonance with conspiracy talk never crosses the line to become actual conspiracy talk. After all, there are plenty of lobbies in Washington, many of whom engage in bullying both light and heavy, a fact often overlooked by those who single out AIPAC as if it were sui generis.) The solution is for critics of Israel to remember their history and to frame their criticisms without recourse to those hoary, ugly tropes; and for the Jewish state's defenders to appreciate the shift that Jews have made from impotence to potency and to appreciate the change that this, the Zionist revolution, entails.

Julius's exploration of this vexed area is insufficient. The role that Israel's own conduct might in some cases play in creating hostility to Israel is addressed in a mere parenthesis, and then waved aside. Nor does he probe deeply enough into the question of how this long history actually influences those speaking and writing today, how centuries

Chance

John sat on a park bench and, in the inhale that preceded a weightless afternoon
sigh, felt sanguinely that all of summer's agreeable fragrances had come together
in this very park, the way the pretty girls in every high school all find each other
eventually, which led him to recall how exotic was the elusive and nuanced

collective scent that trailed groups of girls in hallways, the vaporous
intimation like a mirage; though, if deconstructed, it could also be identified
as a fortunately chance blend of base oils and their subtle overlying scents—
jasmine, lotus, orchid-plants in his mom's backyard.

Rachel and Erin met in the park after years since their last meeting. They
    exchanged brief
versions of their more seasoned lives and dispassionate inquiries about old
    mutual friends,
who were buried in their thoughts under the recent and the not quite recent,
under thoughts of when the mail would come and where the dog had buried his toys.

When John tried to catch Rachel's eye from the other side of a net-less
volleyball match, Rachel was thinking about how she felt small in that park,
how she could feel the city miles to her left and, six hours beyond that,
the last place she'd lived and what was going on there without her.

Both John and Rachel thought the same rare thought at the same moment, though,
of course, neither would ever know. John, however, felt a strange connection
pass between them, which surged right through what would have been a net serve,
as they both thought, for arcane reasons, the words of Catherine from "Wuthering
    Heights":

"He's [She's] more myself than I am. Whatever our souls are made of, it is the same."
And then each felt his and her unique history of disappointments.
All that Erin and Rachel had left in common, immediately, were their sandwiches
from the same shop. So they talked about those.

In common also, however, between Rachel and Erin, was their underlying,
though unacknowledged, hope that everyone they'd ever known they'd meet again,
as though at an important reunion picnic in the future, where the guest list revolved
around each woman's exclusive history and all of the estranged lives of
    acquaintances

would hypothetically unite, so that both Erin and Rachel had let go
of everyone in her life, each time,
with halfhearted promises to retain them in their thoughts
and with only a tentative sadness. Today, however,

John, Erin, and Rachel each felt that all of their significant relationships now
    seemed arbitrary.
And despite that John saw another woman twenty minutes ago and felt the same
    strange
connection drifting through the fumes of a family barbeque, and would again in
    five minutes,
and again in five years with Rachel, under coincidental circumstances, her hair
    dyed red,

the three of them felt, in the same moment, their hearts drop as the weights shifted,
the small, significant moving measure, one of many which tipped
the scales toward resignation and the resulting sad freedom to love
less from now on.

This they each felt later that day, while Erin, in an airplane,
saw a cloud and the whole shadow that it made from end to end over the edge
of the town below, and Rachel, shedding her sunglasses and lifting her visor,
drove into its shadow and then from street to street in the shade.

ANGIE MAZAKIS

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of English anti-Semitism inform those who may not consciously be aware of it. Does it simply sit deep in the soil of English culture, subliminally affecting those who may not have read the "Prioress's Tale" or *Trilby* but have somehow absorbed its message?

This question matters not least because those who are accused of deploying anti-Semitic language or imagery often offer a defense of ignorance. This was certainly the case when the *New Statesman* published a story on Britain's pro-Israel lobby, headlined: "A Kosher Conspiracy?" The magazine's editor insisted its cover image—a brassy star of David, its lowest point piercing a small and supine Union Jack—had "unwittingly" used iconography with anti-Semitic overtones. Such laziness is of course unforgivable; but it would be interesting to know what Julius thinks went through the mind of the *New Statesman*'s graphic designer as his cursor hovered over the color palette on his Apple Mac before choosing a shiny gold for the Star of David. Was this centuries of prejudice at work, transmitted almost unconsciously? Julius writes of the "buried force" of certain words and images, and of course he is right. But how exactly does this force rise from its grave?

My own experience of anti-Semitism in England has been infrequent, vague, and incidental. The most recent episode I recall occurred nearly seven years ago, when a realtor showing my wife and me around a house remarked that "the owner's Jewish, so he'll squeal a bit—but I think we could get the price down." And yet I see Britain reflected abroad as Londonistan, a hotbed of Islamist extremism, a "hub," according to Israel's Reut Institute, of the increasing "delegitimization" of the Jewish state. Shimon Peres recently suggested that "there is in England a saying that an anti-Semite is someone who hates the Jews more than is necessary." I must say it rarely feels like that. But this is not a matter that can be settled anecdotally, not in the face of all the evidence marshaled in *Trials of the Diaspora*, which confirms that this darkness remains an element of the culture.

There is, moreover, a sense that the ground is shifting, that what Anthony Julius calls the "quotidian anti-Semitism of insult and partial exclusion" that characterized the period from the re-admission in the 1650s until the late twentieth century is giving way to something new. He has put his finger on much of it, and also shown a way forward: those who want to defend the Palestinians and stand against Israel need to acquaint themselves with a long and bitter history of anti-Jewish loathing, in word and in deed, that has scarred English history and culture—and then work to free themselves of it or be morally tainted by it. Reading this learned and admirable and powerful book is the place to start. ◆

Ingrid Rowland
THE FORTUNATE JOURNEY

THE ESCORIAL: ART AND POWER IN THE RENAISSANCE
By Henry Kamen
(Yale University Press, 291 pp., $35)

THE HISTORIAN Henry Kamen has spent a distinguished career presenting what he calls a "revisionist" history of early modern Spain. This means taking a more favorable view of the country and its monarchs than the proverbial "Black Legend" of lantern-jawed, inbred Hapsburgs, Torquemada and the Spanish Inquisition, and court dwarves and holy fools in a kingdom where everyone wore black except the heretics destined for the stake and the matadors who skewered bulls in the *corrida*—a culture where only those glittering knights, Don Juan and Don Quixote, provided a spark of brightness amid the lowering gloom.

To a certain extent, Kamen is also what the Italians call a *bastian contrario*, a born contradictor; he has taken on the Black Legend, one suspects, in part because the fight is such a challenge. His enthusiasm for the fray tempts him on occasion to throw in weak arguments alongside strong ones, and to engage in a good deal of what sounds like special pleading; but his energetic battle also serves as a reminder that natural-born critics are essential parts of the human ecosystem, one of its most effective antiseptics, social, intellectual, and cultural.

And Kamen has his points. Spain's role in the world has changed dramatically in the past few decades. Gloom has lifted from the land of Goya and Francisco Franco to reveal the brilliantly colorful, phantasmagoric *movida* of Pedro Almodóvar, Penélope Cruz, Javier Bardem, and Antonio Banderas ("dramatically" is definitely the right word). It is easy to understand, in fact, Kamen's implicit insistence that an entire country, an entire culture, cannot really change overnight from such grimness to such gaiety.

All the same, Kamen's effort to rehabilitate Spain has certainly never taken the easy path. As the titles of his books demonstrate, he has measured himself with some of that country's toughest historical challenges, writing, after extensive archival research, important studies of *The Spanish Inquisition* and *Philip of Spain*. *The Escorial* fits right into the trajectory of these projects, for the palatial monastery of San Lorenzo de El Escorial was not only the most extensive building project of Philip's reign; it was also, in many ways, an image of Philip himself. The Escorial has survived to the present day in good repair, spared the fires that plagued so many of Europe's great palaces, including Madrid's Alcázar in 1734 (as well as the Ducal Palace of Venice in 1577, Stockholm's Three Crown Palace in 1697, and Windsor Castle in the modern *annus horribilis* of 1992).

Defending Spain, moreover, has other rewards, for the country is genuinely appreciative of foreign scholars. Until recently, the Burmese-born, British-educated Kamen held a chair at the Higher Council for Scientific Research in Barcelona, and my own former colleague Earl Rosenthal used to urge the rest of us to shift our research to Spain because Spanish honorific medals are set with real gems. Since the fall of Franco, indeed, scholars have flocked happily to Spain's archives, libraries, and vast troves of art and architecture, eager to discover a new viewpoint on European culture. And more than the culture of Europe: through its colonial tradition, however ambiguous it may have been, Spain today is a point of reference for people from every corner of the world.

By contrast, the monastery of San Lorenzo de El Escorial, standing isolated on its remote highland outside Madrid, gives the impression of a secluded, inward-looking Spain. It is huge, imposing, and sternly linear in its spare Doric architecture, a monumental somewhere in the middle of nowhere. As Kamen writes:

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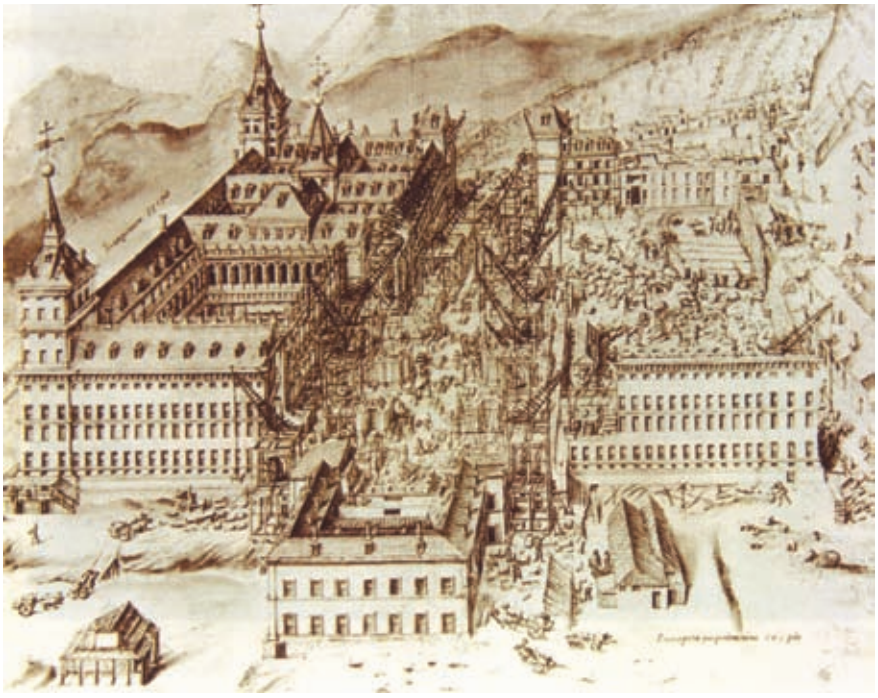
> The guides habitually recite the sum total of what the building possesses. The walls stretch 675 feet by 530 feet: they contain 4,000 rooms, 2,673 windows, 1,250 doors, 16 courtyards, 88 fountains, 45,000 printed books, 5,000 manuscripts, 1,600 paintings, 540 frescos. They might be talking of Alcatraz (as it used to be) in San Francisco, or the Lubyanka in Moscow. In the 100 miles of corridor, one may easily lose one's way.

Yet he also reminds us that the establishment was once surrounded by gardens, many planned by the king himself, so that fruit trees and flower beds would have softened its stern appearance. The landscaping we see today reflects the choices of Philip's successors, including Spain's longtime dictator Franco, for whom the Escorial held great symbolic value, all the more because it had been the site of a Republican atrocity in the Spanish Civil War of 1936. But the king who conceived the project cannot be held responsible for everything that happened to it after his own time; the Escorial does not look quite as Philip imagined it should.



"Building the Escorial," attributed to Fabrizio Castello and Rodrigo de Holanda, 1576

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As a monarch, Philip II enjoys a reputation about as appealing as that of Richard III. In his own lifetime he seems to have come across at best as the somewhat colorless, workaholic son of a spectacular father, Emperor Charles V. In the English-speaking world, phrases such as "Invincible Armada" have clung to him as stubbornly as the nickname of his second wife (he had four of them), "Bloody Mary" Tudor. For several years, thanks to his marriage to Mary, he was a Catholic prince-consort resident on English soil at a time of violent struggle between Catholics and Protestants. Many of Mary's subjects looked upon him with deep suspicion, despite every official assurance that he would never occupy the English throne; the thrones of Spain and the Netherlands would be enough. Yet the Invincible Armada that he sent in 1588 against Mary's Protestant successor, Elizabeth I, only seemed to confirm old suspicions that the king hoped to engulf England just as he had his other great maritime rival, Portugal. A freak storm may have done more to destroy Philip's armada than the dashing English admiral, Sir Francis Drake, but it was Drake and Good Queen Bess who seemed in the aftermath to have God on their side, and the British navy that survived to parlay victory into world supremacy.

Opera lovers know Philip II as the villain of Verdi's *Don Carlo* (*Don Carlos* in its French version), drawn from Friedrich Schiller's outrageously ahistorical play about Philip and his son, the Don Carlo of the title. Philip does wring a drop of pity from audiences when he sings his aria *"Ella giammai m'amò"* ("She never loved me"), a wrenching soliloquy about his loneliness, delivered from his sanctum deep within the Escorial:

> I will sleep alone in my royal mantle
> When my day has come to evening
> I will sleep alone beneath the black vault
> There in the depths of the Escorial.

Typically, Verdi blasts away the aria's sympathetic mood with a sung announcement: "Il Grand' Inquisitor," and a low, insinuating cello line punctuated by bassoons, brings on that dreadful personage, who enters, with excruciating slowness, on the arms of two young clerics. The old inquisitor may be ninety and blind, but he is truly grand, and his brain, as we soon discover, works with undiminished Machiavellian speed. His exchange with Philip, bass on bass, runs the range from smooth insinuation to full-throated tantrum (meanwhile the agonized Philip, in a single phrase, will run two octaves from high to low F), and the scene, unforgettable, has been enough to assassinate the poor king's character for all time.

As the orchestra's pitch rises higher and higher, the monarch reveals that he plans to have his own son, Don Carlo, discreetly assassinated, and then asks: "If I send my son to death, will your hand absolve me?" The inquisitor responds with what the late Jerome Hines made sound like nothing less than the wrath of God, and Ruggero Raimondi has turned, *sotto voce*, into reptilian platitude: "The peace of the Empire is worth the life of a rebel." There follows this exchange between the king and the inquisitor:

> "Yet dare I, as a Christian, immolate my son before the world?"
> "God sacrificed His own to redeem us."
> "But can you uphold a law so severe?"
> "It holds wherever He suffered on Calvary."
> "How can I silence love and nature?"
> "Everything should be silenced to exalt the faith."
> "Very well."

Philip's final reply has skewered his reputation *in saecula saeculorum*.

Don Carlo, like Schiller's play, is so fanciful that it barely qualifies as historical fiction—it is fiction pure and simple. But it is impossible for anyone who loves this glorious opera ever to dissociate the real Philip entirely from his Verdian musical persona, or to pace the Escorial without humming "*Ella giammai m'amò*" as if it

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really did happen there. Nor is Philip's favorite painter, Titian, much better than Verdi as an advocate for the monarch's defense, despite the fact that Titian was dealing with the real Philip, and on the most favorable of terms.

As a portraitist, Titian was potent enough in his own right to strip bare the characters of both friends and patrons, treating Pietro Aretino to big crude brushstrokes that reveal his friend's essential grossness, catching shrewd old Pope Paul III in the act of shrinking back in revulsion from his obsequiously bowing grandson Ottavio, immortalizing the grasping dealer Jacopo Strada in his fur-lined jerkin as he greedily fondles a classical statue. Titian painted several portraits of Philip's father, the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, all of them suggesting a man of exceptional charisma and commanding physical presence, but he shows Philip, repeatedly, as pale, slight, spindle-shanked, with a high forehead and a perpetually uncertain expression. The king, as Titian presents him, is not an attractive figure, and it is a matter of apparent character rather than his odd Hapsburg face.

Charles V, after all, was an unusual-looking man, with a huge, underslung jaw so prognathous that he could not close his mouth, but the force of his personality transformed that oddity into a kind of physical signature—the distinctive trait of an immensely popular leader. Fiercely intelligent, Charles became the most powerful monarch in sixteenth-century Europe, with domains that extended from Bohemia in the east through the heart of Germany, on to Flanders, Burgundy, and Spain, the Kingdom of Naples—that is, all of southern Italy and Sicily—and the duchy of Milan. He spoke Spanish, French, Italian, and German. He must also have been physically graceful; we only have to compare Titian's portraits of father and son to see how comfortably Charles inhabits his long lank body, whether mounted on horseback or standing upright, and how awkwardly, by contrast, Philip stands on his skinny legs and his big, gangling feet, staring out at the painter as if he is pleading for pictorial mercy. But Titian, a staunch republican from Venice, has no mercy to spare.

This, then, is the unpromising raw material that Kamen must connect with the cavernous monastery that was as dear to the king as his collection of Titians. Both the Escorial and the Titians suggest, at the very least, that Philip was an artistic patron of discriminating and wide-ranging taste, because it is hard to imagine a greater contrast than that between the Escorial's hard, clean lines and the sensuous textures of Titian's oils, between the austere, repressive Catholicism of Hapsburg Spain and the voluptuary tolerance of the Most Serene Republic of Venice. As Kamen reminds his readers, Philip II was the most traveled monarch of his era. The eclectic taste was forged by eclectic experience.

Philip was born in 1527 to Charles V (whose Spanish title was King Charles I) and his wife Isabella of Portugal. By the time the young man was sixteen, in 1543, his father had gone off to Germany and left him in charge as regent of Spain. Spain at this time was not a unified state by any stretch of the imagination: the kingdom, as Philip knew it, had been created in the fifteenth century by the marriage of two hereditary monarchs, Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabel (or Isabella) of León and Castile. This alliance brought together vast and largely separate territories, and in order to maintain their control it was the couple's habit to move constantly from city to city. None of Philip's forebears had a real home or a real capital on the lines of Paris, London, or Vienna; Granada, Valladolid, Toledo, and Madrid were all important, along with the places in between. The rulers of Spain all moved all the time, and Philip did as well, as a child, as regent, and ultimately as king in his own right. The court followed. As regent, the sixteen-year-old Philip was also married off to a Portuguese princess, Maria, who died two years later in giving birth to their son, Don Carlos.

In 1548, Charles V took Philip, now a widower of twenty, away from Spain and sent him on an extended tour of Europe. An eager courtier would term this three-year jaunt the "Fortunate Journey." It was the royal equivalent of the Grand Tour, a way to introduce Philip to the Hapsburg realms and the Hapsburg allies, but also the most efficient means to broaden the young regent's education in his father's multilingual, multicultural world. As he set forth for Italy, his cousin Maximilian replaced him in Spain as regent. Philip's travels would take him from northern Italy into southern Germany, where he spent a year, then on into France and the Low Countries. He attended sessions of the Council of Trent, an Imperial Diet, and a Hapsburg family council. He returned to Spain in 1551, after what Philip called "the most perfect voyage one could wish for." Yet a Venetian ambassador reported that the prince was not a success abroad: he was "little liked by the Italians, disliked by the Flemings, and hated by the Germans." Unlike his witty father, he struggled with languages other than Spanish, and in every other respect, too, he came up short by contrast with his glittering parent.

Kamen stresses the fundamental role that this trip played in forging Philip's eclectic tastes in gardening, art, architecture, and music. Essentially a three-year immersion in the Europe of Charles V, the Fortunate Journey does indeed explain many of the qualities that make the Escorial a unique project within Spain, but also within the continent as a whole. Monasteries normally grew up over the course of centuries from a tiny colony to a large community; they did not simply appear on the scene as a single massive design. Nor did other sixteenth-century monarchs endow monasteries with living quarters for themselves: they built churches or they built palaces, but not both.

The Escorial is hybrid not only in its purpose but also in its form. The architecture mixes northern European and Italian elements: the steep timber roofs and the pointed towers that are at home in Germany and the Netherlands (where they shed accumulated snow) combine with the domes and the colonnades of Renaissance Rome, where snow is rare but classical ruins are ubiquitous. Kamen convincingly presents the Escorial as a genuine original. He is right to emphasize the fundamental importance of gardens to our understanding of the whole complex, even if Philip's version of the gardens is long gone.

Garden history is a relatively new development as a scholarly discipline, perhaps because gardening has always been so deeply ingrained in daily life, everywhere, since Neolithic times. Philip had grown up knowing the enchantments of the enclosed Islamic-style gardens of southern Spain. The Fortunate Journey would acquaint him with the formal gardens of Italy: the orderly geometric plots, interspersed with fountains, which were one of the most potent instruments of Italian diplomacy. Not only were these gardens beautiful to the senses, with their sights, sounds, textures, and perfumes; they were also ideal places to exchange gossip and intrigue. There were no hanging drapes for a Polonius to lurk behind; and there was

ANTHONY RUSSO

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crunching gravel to warn of anyone approaching, the splash of water to cover indiscreet conversation. It is no wonder that they spread to the rest of Europe. They afforded endless opportunities for extravagant display and simple delight, but most of all they were useful, especially for people in power.

Philip's Fortunate Journey also put him into contact for the first time with large numbers of Protestants. Charles V dealt routinely with people on both sides of the religious divide, and Kamen argues that Philip was similarly disposed to socialize with Lutherans and Catholics alike, on this trip and on his return to Spain. In the 1540s, at the time of Philip's Grand Tour, conflicts between the two sides had not yet reached the virulence that would break out in the Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre of 1572, or the butchery of the Thirty Years' War, from 1618 to 1648; but 1527, the year of Philip's birth, was also the year when Charles V discharged a troop of Lutheran mercenaries in central Italy, and these descended on Rome for six months of mayhem. Their graffiti is pointedly sectarian, like this still-visible scrawl from the house of the papal banker Agostino Chigi: "What should I write … and not laugh? We let the Pope take a hike." In the late 1540s the Catholics' self-reforming Council of Trent was still in its earliest days, and reconciliation between the two sides seemed eminently possible.

Spain was another matter. Ferdinand and Isabella assumed the title "Most Catholic Majesties" in 1492 after expelling all the Jews and Muslims from their territories. (Isabella hesitated, but Ferdinand, under the influence of Grand Inquisitor Tomás de Torquemada, insisted.) Characteristically, Kamen's *The Spanish Inquisition: A Historical Revision* tried to limit the extent of this calamity, reducing the estimated number of Jewish families uprooted and exiled to some 170,000, but the fact remains that the dreadful late twentieth-century Serbian phrase "ethnic cleansing" goes right back to this moment in Spanish history, when it engendered the concept of non-Jewish ancestry known as "cleanliness of blood," or *limpieza de sangre*. As Alexander McCall Smith's lady detective Precious Ramotswe would say, "That is well known." Some parts of the Black Legend are not legend at all; they are just plain history.

The religious motives behind the Escorial included, then, Philip's consciousness of his own title as Most Catholic Majesty. His Catholicism also played a crucial part in his next marriage, contracted two years after his return to Spain. The sudden death of Edward VI of England in 1553 had put his sister Mary Tudor on the throne; and Charles V, in rapidly failing health but shrewd as ever, pushed Philip into marriage with the English queen in hopes of forging a powerful alliance against France, a temporary political expedient rather than the beginning of a lasting dynasty—at thirty-seven, Mary's prospects for motherhood were not those of the usual teenaged royal bride.

The marriage contract, drafted in January 1554, strictly limited Philip's power to intervene in English affairs, and Parliament eventually accepted it in April. The marriage took place in July in Winchester Cathedral. Philip would spend a year in England with his English wife (to whom he spoke in Spanish while she answered in French), leaving his recently widowed sister Juana behind as regent of Spain. (Beautiful and charismatic—the real heir to Charles V—Juana also has the distinction of having been the one woman ever admitted to full membership in the Society of Jesus. What would Spain have been like with Juana in charge instead of her less-than-brilliant brother?)

Mary Tudor claimed to be pregnant, but the news proved embarrassingly false. She began sending heretics to the stake in 1555. Meanwhile, Charles V had become so physically fragile that he resolved to abdicate and retire to a monastery—and summoned Philip to his presence in the fall of 1555. Typically of this complex man, he staged his ceremony of abdication in Brussels, in the heart of his native territory, but when he withdrew from the world at last, in 1557, it was to the village of Yuste in Extremadura, the remotest part of Spain, to a small palace that he was constructing next to the local monastery. He died at Yuste in 1558. Philip, for his part, never made it back to England. He was now king of Spain and king of the Netherlands, not a crown prince in waiting. Mary Tudor hoped passionately for his return, but her death in 1558 made that unnecessary.

Charles V's retreat to Yuste clearly lies behind Philip's idea of founding a monastery that would also be a kingly residence; and so did an event that took place in the early days of Philip's reign as king. The Battle of Saint-Quentin in 1557 was the only combat that Philip ever saw personally, when his troops succeeded in holding the Belgian castle of Saint-Quentin against a French assault. As Charles V weakened physically and then moved out of the picture entirely, France increased its pressure on the Netherlands, and so Philip began his reign with a huge defensive operation on his hands. The son of a brilliant soldier, he had been brought up to a military life, but was nurtured more, perhaps, on a chivalric ideal than on Charles V's gritty reality. As ever, Titian grasped the difference unerringly: he painted Philip standing awkwardly in his study, but Charles he painted astride a galloping horse. The battle over Saint-Quentin proved a crucial setback for the French; the fact that it occurred on August 10, the feast day of Saint Lawrence, meant that Philip would forever after feel a special devotion to that saint. For his general, the duke of Savoy, success meant security for that duchy, and for its most important sacred relic, the Shroud of Turin—which otherwise might have become the Shroud of Paris.

By 1559, the conflict went into negotiation: France and Spain reached a truce at Cateau-Cambrésis, and Philip was betrothed to the French princess, Elizabeth of Valois. The wedding took place shortly thereafter in Notre-Dame de Paris, with a proxy standing in for Philip.

It was under these circumstances, on his return to Spain from Flanders fields, that Philip wrote to the head of the Jeronimite order in 1561: "In recognition of the victory that Our Lord was pleased to give me on the day of Saint Lawrence of the year 1557, I have decided to build and endow a monastery."

He would spend the rest of his life, another thirty-seven years, putting that decision into effect. The monastic basilica was inaugurated in 1586, a quarter-century after its conception, and officially consecrated only in 1595. Not surprisingly, its original architect, Juan Bautista de Toledo, had died long before, replaced by Juan de Herrera and a team of associates.

By choosing to benefit a relatively small local order, the Jeronimites, and locating the monastery in an unpopulated area, Philip ensured his own continuing control over the Escorial, especially because,

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like many important monastic establishments in the Catholic world, San Lorenzo de El Escorial responded directly to the papacy rather than to a local bishop. The Jeronimites were largely a contemplative order; their mission consisted in constant prayer rather than active participation in worldly events (although they also established a press with Philip's support). They could not have been more different from the Jesuits, who established their colleges in the center of cities, actively cultivating young people, women, and heads of state. The remote location, like that of Yuste, served to focus their prayerful concentration, although the Escorial must have spent its first decades in the noise and the chaos of a permanent construction site.

Kamen treats the Escorial from a historian's standpoint; he is more interested in how the project fits into Philip's plans as a head of state than he is in its eventual architectural form, or in the nature of the works of art that stocked its cavernous halls. Like many historians, Kamen questions some of the basic assumptions that art historians take for granted when they analyze imagery, and this skepticism, too, has its merits. But imagery has always served inescapably as a form of language, and powerfully so in the sixteenth century. Some of the assumptions that art historians have made about the building are matters of a long visual tradition, and so Kamen's insistence that no association between an idea and a form can be made without written documentation is too stringent. Formal conventions work exactly like social mores, and they can be inferred by applying the same methods.

Kamen is skeptical, for example, about the connection between the ground plan of the complex and the traditional symbol of Saint Lawrence, the grill on which he was roasted by Roman authorities when they discovered that he was a deacon in the forbidden Christian church. (Lawrence famously maintained his sense of humor during his martyrdom. As the flames devoured his body, he said to his torturers: "I think I'm done on this side, you may want to turn me over.") Three churches in Rome claim to preserve drippings of his fat. Kamen is right, surely, in contending that none of the building's architects began designing a grill, but any program of imagery always creates spontaneous associations. Once there was a ground plan to look at, the Laurentian grill would have been evident to everyone, and the symbol would then have become real. But here, as elsewhere, Kamen's resolute determination not to believe received wisdom is useful in helping to clarify our ultimate vision of the king and his monastery.

The Escorial still boasts a fabulous library and a fabulous collection of paintings. These were originally destined for the monks' use as much as the king's, because Philip continued to move from place to place as his predecessors had done. His court was riven with intrigue because all courts are riven with intrigue, but it is hard, even in the face of Kamen's passionate pleading on so many fronts, not to conclude that Philip, for all his father's careful grooming, was just a bit dim.

Kamen quite rightly points out that some of the king's peculiarities were products of his culture. Spanish monarchs nurtured an unusual attachment to the relics of saints, but also to the corpses of their loved ones, which, like those of the saints, were thought to contain divine qualities. Philip's great-grandfather Ferdinand of Aragon carted around the body of Isabella for some months before interring her in Granada. Ferdinand's relatives, who ruled Naples from 1441 to 1503, were never buried at all; they are still housed in lead coffins on a high shelf in the sacristy of San Domenico Maggiore in Naples (where they give that chamber a distinctly odd smell). Philip's grandmother, Juana the Mad, carried her husband's coffin around with her for years—but probably did not peer into it every night and run her fingers through his remains, as the gossips reported.

Hence the fact that Philip paid particular attention to the Escorial's potential as a mausoleum is only a matter of family tradition. Don Carlos and Elizabeth of Valois were the first bodies to arrive there, in 1568. Neither bore the slightest resemblance to the characters in Verdi's opera. Philip's eldest son was a horrible boy, with a misshapen head and a twisted, cruel soul. Elizabeth, rather than a weighty and wise soprano, was a typical royal bride: a spoiled teenager whose sole mission in life was to bear children to a man we would consider middle-aged and the sixteenth century would have considered elderly. Philip was married one more time, to another teenager, Anne of Austria, with whom he would spend ten years basking (to the extent that dutiful Philip could ever bask) in something that resembled a normal family life. It was in her company, and that of their children, that Philip would see his great project begin to assume its definitive shape, and this is when he began to concentrate on its garden.

Kamen devotes a chapter to a comparison between Philip II and Elizabeth I, concluding that Elizabeth was in fact the greater despot, and this assessment seems fair enough. Philip's succession was never in doubt; he never needed to fight and scheme as she did, nor consolidate his power by creating a personal myth—the royal body cult had already taken care of that. As patrons, they were both fortunate beyond belief: Titian and Shakespeare do not come along every day. But the paintings that Titian sent to Philip were not, perhaps, the painter's best—despite Spanish assertions from the sixteenth century onward that the cream of Titian's crop was sent abroad. Titian was an implacable critic of his own work; his finest efforts, surely, were the ones he knew he would have to live with every day for the rest of his life, and so they are found in Venice. What was Philip going to say? He saw only what he was sent, not the full range of the product.

What, in the end, are we to make of Philip and his Escorial? It has long since ceased to function as a monastery; the Jeronimites were ejected by Napoleon (who also suppressed the Spanish Inquisition), replaced at his fall by the Augustinians, and the last Augustinians were

Dust Devil

Mystical hysterical amalgam of
earth and wind
and mind

over and of
the much-loved

dust you go
through a field I know

by broken heart
for I have learned this art

of flourishing
vanishing

wherein to live
is to move

cohesion
illusion

wild untouchable toy
called by a boy

God's top
in a time when time stopped.

CHRISTIAN WIMAN

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slaughtered by the Spanish Republicans in 1936—a blot on the Republican copybook that clearly pleases the contrarian in Kamen. The Escorial today is a museum rather than a residence. The royal family of Spain has a stable capital in Madrid, and it is no longer so remote from its public, nor so rapacious in the demands it makes, either on its citizens or on the members of its own family. Prince Felipe, after all, has married his Letizia, and the country is delighted. Spain today is altogether a better place to live than it was in the time of Philip II.

Kamen notes that the king attended "only" four autos-da-fé in person, and that none of them involved burnings at the stake. But surely it is incontrovertible that Spanish colonial rule, the Spanish Inquisition, and Spanish pressures on the Catholic church caused the world untold misery. The legacy of Philip II and the Escorial is as mixed and ambiguous as their eclectic heritage. ◆

Ruth Franklin
DECHRONIFICATION

SUPER SAD TRUE LOVE STORY
By Gary Shteyngart
(Random House, 334 pp., $26)

THERE WAS ONCE a city in the heart of America where all life seemed to be, if not entirely in harmony with its surroundings, then at least functioning in its own kind of equilibrium. Day after day, workers repaired to skyscrapers stacked with single-person cubicles, where they sat for eight, nine, ten hours gazing into glowing screens that were at once portals to the outside world and magical mirrors reflecting their own desires. The streets below buzzed with the sound of a million simultaneous conversations, each person clutching a miniature device close to his or her ear, checking in with loved ones near and far to find out who won the game or what was for dinner.

And then, one spring, a strange blight crept over the area. Doctors were puzzled by a new kind of sickness among their patients, who were afflicted with a form of amnesia that struck whenever they picked up a book, a magazine, or a newspaper: they recognized the object, but they could no longer remember what it was or how to use it. Classrooms that once rang happily with the voices of children performing plays and reciting poetry were now nearly silent, the hush punctuated only by the tapping of little fingers on digital boxes. Meanwhile, the jagged plastic detritus of this society overflowed the city's garbage cans and landfills. For a few miserable months, the viscous raw material of its technological trinkets bubbled unstoppably into the ocean, snuffing out the lives of sea creatures as it had stifled the brains of those on land. No witchcraft, no enemy action, was responsible for this destruction: the people had brought this on themselves.

All right, back to 2010. The apocalypse, as far as I can tell, is not yet upon us. Unlike the scenarios Rachel Carson described in her famous opening to *Silent Spring*, the disaster that I have depicted is fictional—mostly. But over the past few years, the horsemen's drumbeats have become distinctly more audible. A cascade of premonitory articles in magazines and newspapers has borne grim tidings of the potential dangers that lurk in our wireless connections and our smartphones: not necessarily in the devices themselves (though a recent *New York Times* column asked whether radiation-emitting cell phones might be "the new cigarettes"), but in the behavior they foster. Is Google—shorthand for the unimaginably immense depository of information at our fingertips—making us stupider by absolving us of the need to remember facts, figures, quotations? Is Facebook, where anyone can "friend" anyone else by clicking a button, unschooling us in the psychological skills and emotional probities necessary to create and to maintain relationships with other human beings? Is the very phenomenon of constant connectivity a detriment to our marriages, our careers, our brain cells? The ability to "be online" (already an antiquated phrase) anywhere and anytime may ultimately be seen as the twenty-first century's version of DDT: a technological innovation blithely presumed to be a good until its unintended consequences became impossible to ignore.

Gary Shteyngart's novel offers a vision of the worst-case scenario, a dystopian American culture sexed up, dumbed down, and digitized ad absurdum. *Super Sad True Love Story* appears to take place some thirty to fifty years from now. The United States, embroiled in a losing war with Venezuela, is no longer a dominant world power. The dollar has been "devaluated" and pegged to the yuan, and the country is governed by a single "Bipartisan Party," backed up by the American Restoration Authority (ARA, formerly known as Homeland Security). The culture of consumerism dominates, with constant streams of data flowing in and out of ubiquitous smartphones (now called, unpronounceably, "äppäräti"). With the click of a button anyone can discover anyone else's bank balance, scrutinize their recent purchases, or look at photographs of their home, while simultaneously broadcasting one's own statistics to anyone within range. It goes without saying that books are no longer read in this world, where a two-paragraph e-mail message constitutes a "long-form standard English text." More than that, they are objects of disgust: when a character takes out a book on a plane, his seatmate complains that it smells bad.

Shteyngart, who emigrated to America from the Soviet Union with his parents in 1979, at the age of seven, has been celebrated as a satirist out of the Russian literary tradition of Gogol and *Oblomov*. His two previous novels, *The Russian Debutante's Handbook* and *Absurdistan*, were both overstuffed farces, written in a boisterous, exuberant style and peopled with cartoonish characters, including a young dominatrix named Challah (like the bread) and a gangster who drives around in a peach-colored Cadillac. These books often showed Shteyngart to be less interested in real characters or deep meaning than in piling on episode after episode of picaresque hilarity, as if the picaresque required only shallows. He was unconcerned to raise his slapstick into the service of his fiction.

But a person who bangs on a piano long enough will start to hit the right notes. *Super Sad True Love Story* is a satire that strikes painfully at many of our culture's weakest spots, particularly its pornographic obsession with sex and its nonchalance about Internet privacy, or what remains of it. (The Big Brotheresque policies of Facebook, which has become notorious for allowing advertisers and others access to its subscribers' personal information without their explicit consent, are an obvious corollary to the constant involuntary "streaming" of data in Shteyngart's novel.) If the book's cumulative effect is thinner than the paper (or screen) on which it is read, this may be by Shteyngart's design. The

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future will have no room for everything-but-the-kitchen-sink extravaganzas like his previous novels—or, for that matter, the historical and psychological investigations of Tolstoy or Chekhov, to which this book explicitly bids farewell. The novel of the future, like the love object who is here the center of obsession, will be a "sleek digital creature," buzzing with information and fun to play with but in the end perfunctory.

When we first meet Lenny Abramov, the latest of Shteyngart's Russian-expat protagonists, he is on his way back to New York after a year spent unprofitably in Italy. Lenny is the Life Lovers Outreach Coordinator of the Post-Human Services division of the Staatling-Wapachung Corporation. This thoroughly postmodern company is engaged in that most ancient of tasks, the search for eternal life. "The technology is almost here," Lenny writes in his diary, which forms the novel's backbone. (In a gesture of canny irony, Shteyngart's futuristic book is styled as part epistolary novel, part pseudo-diary—two of the most antiquated literary forms.) Those who can pay for "dechronification treatments"—in the parlance of the novel, they are known as High Net-Worth Individuals, or HNWIs—will be able to use technological innovations, such as something called "smart blood," to counteract the effects of aging. Lenny's boss, a nearly seventy-year-old man who appears to be in his mid-twenties and goes by the infantilized name of Joshie, is the guinea pig.

Lenny's job is to search out HNWIs and sign them up as clients: "I work in the creative economy.... Indefinite Life Extension," he declares. But he spent most of his time in Italy indulging in local food and women, with the predictable negative effects on his future with the company, which rates the success of its employees as much by their blood count (overdosing on carbs raises glucose levels) as by their productivity. At the company's headquarters, located in a building on Park Avenue that once was a synagogue, before "the congregation folded after being bamboozled by some kind of Jewish pyramid scheme years ago"—Shteyngart's touch is not light—the results of the employees' physicals are displayed on a giant flip-board like the kind once used in train stations: "our methylation and homocysteine levels, our testosterone and estrogen, our fasting insulin and triglycerides, and, most important, our 'mood and stress indicators,' which were always supposed to read 'positive/playful/ready to contribute' but which, with enough input from competitive co-workers, could be changed to 'one moody betch today' or 'not a team playa this month.' " Co-workers greet each other with lines such as "I'm going to make you a plate of cruciferous vegetables, baby" and hang out in an Eternity Lounge, where they can pat anti-aging serum under their eyes, drink green tea, and take fish-oil supplements.

But on Lenny's last night abroad he encounters a more traditional elixir of immortality, at least as far as middle-aged men are concerned. A just-out-of-college Korean woman named Eunice Park, she has "full shiny lips and a lovely if incongruous splash of freckles across her nose." After an evening together that ends with a clumsy sexual encounter, Lenny is infatuated. But she is unimpressed by his age (thirty-nine), his appearance (pudgy and balding), and the piles of books in his apartment, which, she informs him, her "text-major friends" call "doorstops." "You're old, Len," she tells him in the morning.

So why, then, does she follow him to New York? The reason, so far as it can be discerned from Eunice's e-mails to her friends and family members and the transcripts of her instant-message chats, has little to do with love. (E-mail is now controlled by an outfit called GlobalTeens, so that e-mailing becomes "teening," and talking is "verballing.") Like Yulia Sergeyevna, the young woman who decides to marry the much older Laptev in Chekhov's novella *Three Years* (which Shteyngart's novel invokes explicitly and implicitly), she desires security and stability. But she is also drawn to Lenny's aura of analog authenticity, which is an anomaly in her world of hyperdigital isolation. Bliss with a previous boyfriend was, for her, sitting on the couch side by side, each absorbed in their own äppärät. Watching Lenny talk—actually engage in the process of carrying on a conversation with another person, complete with spittle on the lips—she thinks, "Wow, you're kind of beautiful, Lenny. You're like what Prof Margaux in Assertiveness Class used to call a 'real human being.' "

Lenny, an aging Luddite in comparison with Eunice's generation of tuned-in, turned-on dropouts, finds himself both tortured and captivated by the phenomenon of eternal connectivity. When Joshie gives him a new pebble-sized äppärät to replace his clunky outdated one—"What is this, an iPhone?" the boss sneers—his feelings for it are akin to "worship": "the colorful pulsating mosaic of it, the fact that it knows every last stinking detail about the world, whereas my books only know the minds of their authors." And his internal monologue is already steeped in the vocabulary of digital culture. Sitting across from Eunice at the dinner table, "we locked eyes for a millisecond, but it was enough time to download a million bits of sympathy." After they first meet, he searches on social-networking sites for photos of her to add to his mind's "burgeoning Eunice archive." In a touching moment of real empathy, he notices a blemish on her face in one of the images. Zooming in, he can see that it is the mark of a slap. The screen, then, does have an advantage over real life: it allows access to moments of personal history that go unspoken but remain forever in the digital memory bank.

The fundamental premise of every dystopian fantasy is that to a certain extent it is already true. Shteyngart's often very funny novel derives much of its humor from the fact that the journey from our world to his requires only a minor tweak. There are two right-wing news channels, "Fox Liberty-Prime" and "Fox Liberty-Ultra." A friend of Lenny's has become a media star by "streaming" for hours a day about her weight problems. (The tweeting at the end of days.) More sinisterly, the ARA operates under the Cheneyesque policy of "deny and imply": a typical placard by a security checkpoint reads, "It is forbidden to acknowledge the existence of this checkpoint ('the object'). By reading this sign you have denied existence of the object and implied consent." The novel's greatest departure from the New York City of 2010 might be that hipsters, having given up Williamsburg, now congregate in bars with one-word names on Staten Island.

But it is the vulgarity of Shteyngart's world, which happens also to be its defining characteristic, that most closely resembles our own. Women wear transparent "Onionskin" jeans and "TotalSurrender" panties that pop off at the click of a button; an Internet shopping site is named AssLuxury. The "EmotePad" on an äppärät can pick up a change in the wearer's blood pressure when he looks at a woman, and the device offers statistics for "fuckability," "personality," and "anal/oral/vaginal preference." Eunice and her best friend, in their e-mail messages, address each other as "bitch" and "slut"; when her friend is depressed, her boyfriend comforts her by telling her that she looks "slutty" and that her "fuckability was 800+." (The friend is identified

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throughout only by her e-mail moniker, "Grillbitch"; we do not learn her real name until the end of the novel.) All this is exaggerated for effect, of course. But try to recall what a shock it would have been, twenty-five years ago, to be told that the pornography once sold in plain wrappers at newsstands would be accessible to anyone at any time on the Web—for free!—and that women would regularly get Brazilian bikini waxes at their neighborhood salons.

Eunice's mother, in the old-fashioned terms of the immigrant, warns her to withhold herself sexually: "Do not give away mystery." But such a caution is absurd in a world in which sex itself has lost its power to cut through the fog of social isolation that surrounds these characters. Eunice's best friend, in a telling phrase, complains about her own inability to connect in person with another human being: "It's like I'm floating around and the moment anyone gets near me or I get near anyone there's just this STATIC." Lenny, reporting to his diary on his first sexual encounter with Eunice, writes that "we kissed, lazily, like it was nothing, then roughly, like we meant it." Both descriptions frame the act as an *act*: they are putting on a show, like performers in a porn video. It's not nothing, but they don't mean it, either. Eunice herself appears to Lenny as more avatar than person, "a nano-sized woman who had likely never known the tickle of her own pubic hair, who lacked both breast and scent, who existed as easily on an äppärät screen as on the street before me."

"What if Eunice and I just said 'no' to all this," Lenny muses over drinks at the Staten Island bar. "What if we just went home and read books to each other?" "Oh God," groans one of his friends, who is streaming the conversation. "You just halved my viewer load." But soon they will have to collapse back into reading books. A full-scale rebellion breaks out among veterans of the Venezuela war and Low Net Worth Individuals (LNWIs), otherwise known as homeless people, angry about the government's broken promises. The ARA crushes it with violence, and the result comes to be called "the Rupture": a total information blackout. Lenny and Eunice are forced to hole up in his apartment, afraid to venture into the lawless city streets, the electricity out. At one point during these dark bibliophilic days, he catches her glancing over his old copy of *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, "her index fingers raised above the book as if ready to tap at the BUY ME NOW symbol on her äppärät, her other fingers massaging the book's back, maybe even enjoying its thickness and unusual weight, its relative quiet and meekness."

Encouraged, Lenny reads to her; but the book is quite literally written in a language that she doesn't understand. It is "a novel of ideas set in a country that meant nothing to her, set in a time . . . that might as well not have existed." He, too, barely recognizes it. (There are a few signs that even Lenny, who is called the "last reader on earth," was never as much of an intellectual as he thought he was: Eunice at one point discovers him moving a ruler down the page and whispering aloud to himself.) "What had happened to all these publications?" he wonders, looking at the blurbs inside the novel's cover. "I remember reading the *Times* in the subway, folding it awkwardly while leaning against the door, caught up in the words, worried about crashing to the floor or tripping over some lightly clad beauty . . . but even more afraid to lose the thread of the article in front of me, my spine banging against the train door, the clatter and drone of the massive machine around me, and me, with my words, brilliantly alone." Frustrated, Eunice goes back to her nonfunctional äppärät and pulls up the last Web page she had been looking at before the Rupture—a shopping site, naturally. "I can't buy anything," she moans.

Is this part of Shteyngart's comedy of horrors—the death of the book—also already true? In one way, of course, the very presence of the artifact in our hands, even if we might be reading it on an iPhone, offers a counter to Eunice's declaration that "we're in a post-literate age." But on another level Shteyngart's book seems to prove, or at least to desire, its own non-existence. At the end we learn that someone hacked into Lenny's and Eunice's GlobalTeens accounts and edited the contents into the book we are reading—or, as Lenny calls it, "the text you see on your screen." Is this a shout-out to all the Kindle and iPad readers out there? Or could it be that the book itself, embarrassed by its pre-digital ways, pretends that it does not exist? "By reading this sign you have denied existence of the object and implied consent."

Lenny insists he never intended to publish his diaries. "It never occurred to me that *any* text would *ever* find a new generation of readers," he says. And yet not only are there still readers, there are even book reviewers, though not particularly discerning ones. They unanimously agree that Eunice's entries are "the gems in the text." In the distinguished literary magazine *whorefuckrevu*, one of them writes that "she is not a born writer, as befits a generation reared on Images and Retail, but her writing is more interesting and more alive than anything else I have read from that illiterate period." This is a joke, of course. Eunice's "writing"—her e-mail messages and her chat transcripts—is neither interesting nor alive. It could not be so: she has no life experience, no education, no ambition. She writes in the superficial voice of a moderately profane post-teenage girl.

But in the end the joke is on us, the readers of this absurd novel that is finally neither super sad nor true nor actually about love. (Whose language is the title in?) To criticize Shteyngart's book for its emotionally stunted prose is beside the point. One has only to contrast it with the capaciousness of *Three Years*, the Chekhov novella of May–December love that Lenny admires, to understand that a real love story simply cannot be told in such a debased style, even in a joke. The form mortally reduces the text. Eunice is a digital creature to her core, her mind little more than a pastiche of advertising images: how could she be expected to express an authentic emotion? Lenny is a little more of a rounded human being, but even he is at the mercy of the buzzwords and the slogans that constantly jangle through his head. Love cannot exist between two such virtual people. And if it could, their language is inadequate to the task of describing it. A robot might just as well try to transform itself into a poet.

A dystopia whose main feature is the corruption of language must be particularly frightening for a writer such as Shteyngart, whose novels traffic not in emotions or ideas, but in the blustering exuberance of their own expression. There is a certain optimism in the fact that, even in the post-literate age, people are still reading. The trouble is that what they are reading is rubbish: intentional, funny, clever rubbish, but rubbish all the same. Lenny writes that some critics have accused him of "slavish emulation of the final generation of American 'literary' writers." That "literary," skulking behind quotation marks, might be the saddest word in this finally unmoving novel. ◆

ANTHONY RUSSO

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Washington Diarist

Mosque Notes

Collective responsibility. One of the most accomplished Jewish terrorists of our time, Baruch Goldstein, came from the Jewish universe in which I was raised. When he committed his crime, there were a few former and present citizens of that universe, a revered rabbi of mine among them, who demanded a stringent communal introspection; but the critics were denounced as slanderers who tarred all of religious Zionism, or all of "Modern Orthodox" Judaism, or all of Judaism, with the same treasonous brush. The killer, we were angrily instructed, was an aberration, and any generalization from his action was an unwarranted imputation of collective responsibility. I disagreed. Baruch Goldstein murdered in the name of Judaism, with an interpretation of Judaism, from a social and intellectual position within Judaism. The same was later true of Yigal Amir. They did not represent the entirety of Judaism, or of the Jewish institutions that formed them—but the massacre in Hebron and the assassination in Tel Aviv were among their effects. If the standpoint of broadly collective responsibility was the wrong way to explain the atrocities, so too was the standpoint of purely individual responsibility. There were currents of culture behind the killers. Their ideas were not only their own. I am reminded of those complications when I hear that Islam is a religion of peace. I have no quarrel with the construction of Cordoba House, but not because Islam is a religion of peace. It is not. Like Christianity and like Judaism, Islam is a religion of peace and a religion of war. All the religions have all the tendencies within them, and in varying historical circumstances varying beliefs and practices have come to the fore. It is absurd to describe the perpetrators of September 11 as "murderers calling themselves Muslims," as Karen Hughes recently did. They did not call themselves Muslims. They *were* Muslims. America was not attacked by Islam, but it was also not attacked by Jainism. Mohammed Atta and his band (as well as the growing number of "homegrown" Islamist killers and plotters) represent a real and burgeoning development within Islam, an actualization of one of Islam's possibilities, an indigenous transnational movement of apocalyptic violence that has brought misery to Muslim societies, and to us. It is not Islamophobic to say so. Quite the contrary: it is to side with Muslims who are struggling against the same poison as we are. Apologetic definitions of Islam will not avail anybody in this struggle.

Sacred space. Nationalism has always arrogated to itself a hallowing power, and the sanctification of Ground Zero is the natural expression of the memory of a nation. But this is a secular sanctity. I see no justification for establishing a mosque, a church, or a synagogue at Ground Zero, even though Muslims, Christians, and Jews died there. (Irreligious people also died there.) Yet nobody is proposing to establish a mosque at Ground Zero. Sacralization is an act of demarcation: its force is owed to its precision. Outside the line is outside the line. Park Place is outside the line, in the "profane" realm. Or has the right finally found a penumbra in which it can believe? On September 13, 2001, a construction worker at Ground Zero discovered two large steel beams in the shape of a cross. Given the design of the towers, the likelihood of such perpendicularity was high—when I visited the unimaginable place a short while later there were smoldering right angles everywhere—but the discovery of this cross was deemed a miracle, and it was raised on a concrete base, and there was talk of incorporating it into the memorial at the site. (It now stands a block away, at a church on Barclay Street.) I was always discomfited by the sight of it. Christianity was not attacked on September 11. America was attacked. They are not the same thing. The image of the Ground Zero cross now appears in TV ads excoriating the "Ground Zero mosque." The people behind those ads do not deplore a religious war, they welcome one.

Insensitivities. There are families of the victims who oppose Cordoba House and there are families of the victims who support it. Every side in this debate can invoke the authority of the pain. But how much authority should it have? I do not see that sentiment about the families should abrogate considerations of principle. It is odd to see conservatives suddenly espouse the moral superiority of victimhood, as it is odd to see them suddenly find an exception to their expansive view of religious freedom. Everybody has their preferred insensitivities. In matters of principle, moreover, polling is beside the point, or an alibi for the tyranny of the majority, or an invitation to demagogues to make divisiveness into a strategy, so that their targets come to seem like they are the ones standing in the way of social peace, and the "decent" thing is for them to fold. Why doesn't Rauf just move the mosque? That would bring the ugliness to an end. But why don't Palin and Gingrich just shut up? That, too, would bring the ugliness to an end. Certainly the diabolization of Rauf, an imam who has publicly recited the *Shema* as an act of solidarity and argued that the Declaration of Independence "embodies and restates the core values of the Abrahamic, and thus also the Islamic, ethic," must cease. In a time when an alarming number of Muslims wish to imitate Osama bin Laden, here is a Muslim who wishes to imitate Mordecai Kaplan. Turn away, from *him*? But he may be replaced at his center by less moderate clerics, it is said. To which I would reply with a list of synagogues whose establishment should be regretted because of the fanatical views of their current leaders. I also hear that there should be no mosque on Park Place until there are churches and synagogues in Saudi Arabia. I get it. Until they are like us, we will be like them.

A night at the J. At the JCC on Q Street a few weeks ago, there was a family night for "kibbutz camp." As the children sang "Zum Gali Gali," an old anthem of the Zionist pioneers, I noticed among the jolly parents a Muslim woman swaddled in black. Her child was among those children! Her presence had no bearing on the question of our security, but it was the image of what we are protecting. No American heart could be unmoved by it. So: Cordoba House in New York and a Predator war in Pakistan—graciousness here and viciousness there—this should be our position. For those who come in peace, peace; for those who come in war, war.

Leon Wieseltier

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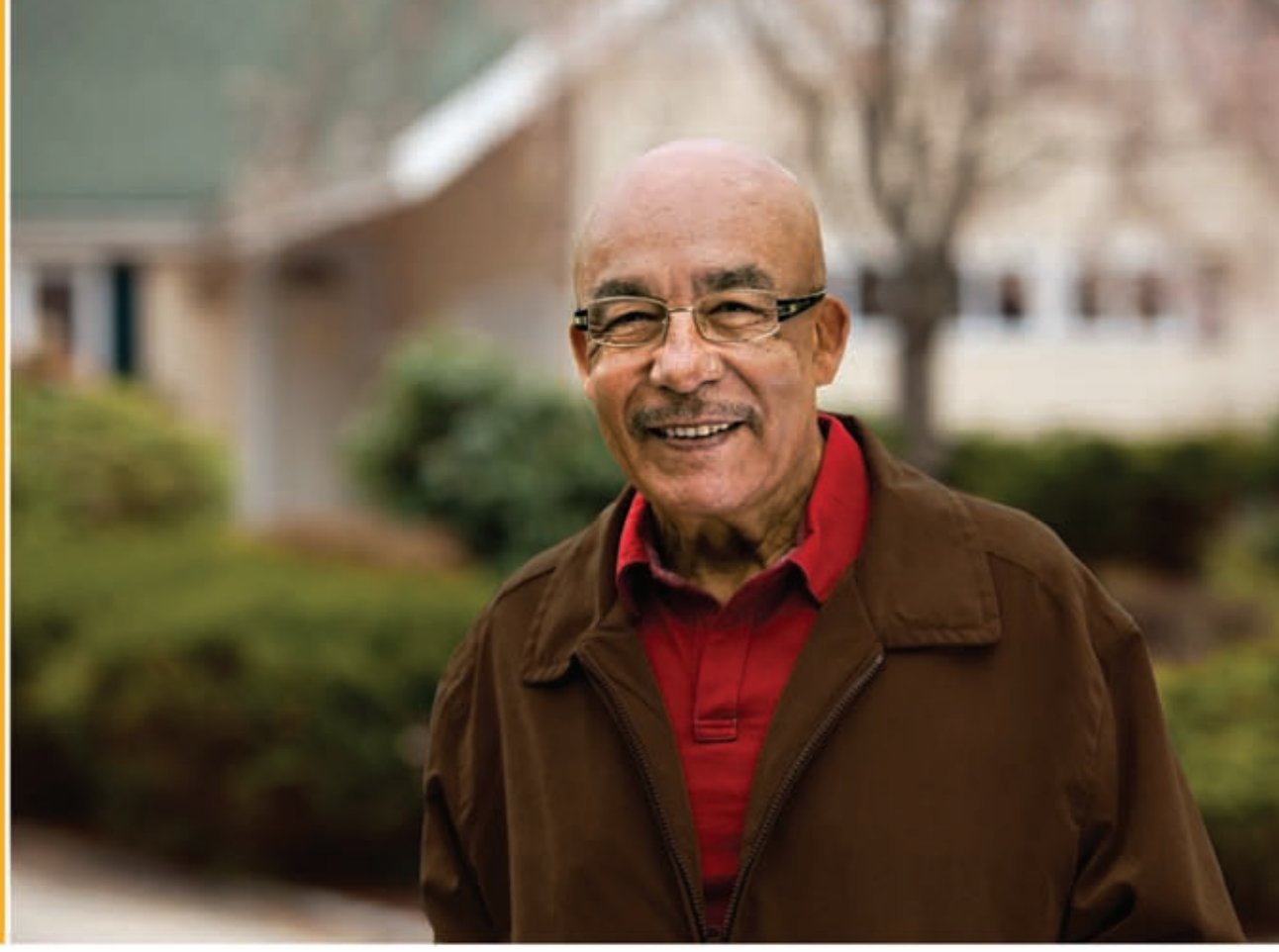

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